A History of Alexander the Great in World Culture

Alexander III of Macedon (356–323 BC) has for more than 2,000 years been one of the best-recognised names from antiquity. He set about creating his own legend in his lifetime, and subsequent writers and political actors developed it. He acquired the surname 'Great' by the Roman period, and the *Alexander Romance* transmitted his legendary biography to every language of medieval Europe and the Middle East. An adventurer who sought the secret of immortality and discussed the purpose of life with the naked sages of India, he became a model for military achievement as well as a religious prophet bringing Christianity (in the Crusades) and Islam (in the Qur'an and beyond) to the regions he conquered. This innovative and fascinating volume explores these and many other facets of his reception in various cultures around the world, right up to the present, and his role in gay activism.

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Tradition', in *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by Carolina Cupane and Bettina Krönung (2016); 'The Caliph's Mirror Reflecting Aristotle's Frowning Face: The Transition and Restyling of Ancient Political Philosophy Concerning Good Kingship', in *New Themes, New Styles in the Eastern Mediterranean: Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Encounters, 5th–8th Centuries*. Late Antique History and Religion, vol. 16; *Beyond the Fathers*, vol. I, edited by Hagit Amirav and Francesco Celia (2017); and 'The Consul and the King, Wetzstein and Alexander', Part 2: Wetzstein Collections, in *Manuscripts, Politics and Oriental Studies: Life and Collections of Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815–1905) in Context*, edited by Boris Liebrenz and Christoph Rauch (2019).

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of the sixteen manuscripts of the French prose *Roman d'Alexandre*. In 2019 she published, with Alison Stones and David J. A. Ross (†), *Illustrated Medieval Alexander-Books in French Verse*, listing all the iconography of the novels of Alexander of Paris and Thomas of Kent. At the same time she was preparing the edition and translation of the first catalogue of moralised monsters in French, an anonymous work of the thirteenth century. In 2018 she was appointed to the Academic Institute of France for a project on the presence of literature in domestic iconography, mainly painted ceilings, in Europe (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries).

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Preface

Not another Companion? This book is intended not so much as an aid to research as an attempt to present a complex historical phenomenon – namely, the continuing re-emergence of the figure of Alexander III (the Great) of Macedon as a way of articulating people's understanding of events and intellectual positions over more than two thousand years of world history. No historical personage other than Jesus has been so persistently the subject of attention since the end of his earthly life. When I wrote *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (2008), it was the product of some twenty years of research, yet there were aspects of the story that I was scarcely able to touch, sometimes through lack of space but more often through lack of competence in the relevant fields. Michael Sharp's interest in commissioning this book for Cambridge University Press offered me the opportunity to compile a book with a wider purview and to introduce aspects of the subject that I had been unable to tackle. The subject resists a systematic treatment because of its vast scope, yet the chapters in this volume represent a series of windows, through each of which another intellectual landscape may be discerned: like landscape paintings, they are focussed selections of phenomena that, perhaps, convey the quality of the panorama in its entirety. Some historical moments, trends and turning points may be brought into focus through contemplation of the role of this long-dead king.

In the past twenty-five years interest in the Alexander legends has grown considerably. I am delighted that so many distinguished scholars agreed to join me in the task of presenting Alexander as a figure of world culture. Some of those scholars, alas, showed more enthusiasm than staying power, and I particularly regret the absence of chapters on the medieval epics and on Alexander in modern Greece. I would also have wished to see the Greek origins of the *Romance* more extensively treated by a different hand from mine – though this is not a book about the *Romance* as such. Other subjects too still lack a full treatment – for example, the Far Eastern versions of the

Romance (but Su Fang Ng's work *Alexander the Great from Britain to South-East Asia* (Oxford 2019) goes a long way to filling the gap) or the reimagining of his legend in Africa (not just the Ethiopic translation of the *Romance*). I fully expect that over the coming years more manifestations of Alexander's persistent presence in world culture will be revealed.

Abbreviations

Classical authors and works are cited according to the conventions in Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. Glare.
In addition, note the following:

BNJ	*Brill's New Jacoby*. Leiden. Ed. I. Worthington.
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnhout.
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Salzburg.
FGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Ed. F. Jacoby. Leiden, 1923–.
MGH SS M	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*. Munich.
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris, 1857–66.
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*. Lyon.

1 Introduction

Formation and Diffusion of the Alexander Legend

RICHARD STONEMAN

Alexander III (the Great) was born in the Macedonian city of Pella in the north of the Greek peninsula in 356 BC. Following the assassination of his father, Philip II of Macedon, in 336, he took up the cause of an attack on the Persian Empire, which his father was planning, and in spring 334 crossed the Hellespont into Persian territory with an army of at least 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. In the course of the next eleven years he took control of all parts of the Persian Empire, from Egypt eastwards; when the reigning Great King, Darius III, was assassinated by two of his nobles in summer 330, Alexander succeeded him as 'King of Asia'. Not content with this defeat of his rival, Alexander continued his march into Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, first to suppress Persian pretenders and then to reclaim the provinces of Bactria and Sind which had been part of the empire of Darius I but had since slipped from Persian control. A confrontation with an Indian local ruler, Porus, on the river Hyphasis (Jhelum) in spring 326 led to the reinstatement of the latter as a vassal ruler. But soon after this the army expressed discontent with the never-ending march to the end of the world, as the monsoon season made camp and fighting conditions insupportable. In November 326 Alexander announced a retreat, and his fleet sailed down the river Indus to the outer Ocean, arriving at Patala (Hyderabad) some six months later in mid-325. A challenging march through the desert of Gedrosia (Baluchistan) to return to Susa and thence Babylon killed a large portion of his army, but eventually the remnant were reunited with the fleet under Nearchus at Carmania (Kerman). Alexander's closest friend, Hephaestion, died at Ecbatana (Hamadan) in autumn 324; in spring 323 Alexander entered Babylon, which was to be the capital of his empire. But he was taken ill and died suddenly on 10 June 323. Rumours of poison were rife, but the cause was probably cholera, typhus or a related marsh-borne disease, exacerbated in a constitution weakened by wounds and grief.[1]

[1] There are many biographies of Alexander. A recent classic is Lane Fox 1973, while the standard scholarly treatment is Bosworth 1988. Stoneman 2004 is a brief introductory sketch.

This short and dazzling career quickly became the material for legends as well as historical accounts. In this introduction I aim to sketch the main lines of Alexander's impact in Greek and Roman antiquity, and to set the scene for the developments more fully explored by the other contributors. I have made no attempt to provide complete bibliographical references for this sketch, since literature is cited more fully by the individual contributors. (See also the bibliography in Stoneman 2008). Throughout the two millennia under consideration the main focus has to be on texts and works of art; if Alexander was also bruited upon the tongues of men (as passing references in Shakespeare, for example, suggest) this is scarcely or rarely recoverable by historians in any detail.

Alexander himself had been keen to create his own image and legend by various actions including his visit to the tomb of Achilles at Troy, his consultation of the oracle of Ammon at Siwa in Egypt, where he was hailed as the son of the god, and the creation of a story that even Heracles had failed to conquer the Sogdian rock as he had done. Historians accompanied him to record his achievements, including Callisthenes, who wrote of how the sea drew back to allow his army to pass at Phaselis, but Callisthenes was later implicated in a plot against the king's life and was executed, or died in prison. Alexander was strict in his choice of artists to portray him: Apelles in painting and Lysippus in sculpture. Most painting is lost, though Apelles became a figure of legend in his own right, celebrated in baroque art and in John Lyly's play *Campaspe* (see also Stoneman, Chapter 15 in this volume). The depiction of Alexander in ancient art is surveyed by Olga Palagia (Chapter 3), who shows how widely diffused his image became, in a way that parallels his repeated appearances in literature.

Alexander's physical remains also became a focus of veneration, memory and cult, after his general Ptolemy secured control of his funereal catafalque and brought it to Memphis, later transferring the body to Alexandria, the city Alexander founded in 331, which remains his greatest monument. Dorothy Thompson (Chapter 2) shows how central the memory of Alexander was to the Ptolemaic kings who ruled Egypt, and how his legends, many of which originated there, infiltrated Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions.

In the generation or two after Alexander's death, the legends multiplied rapidly, and came together in the Greek *Alexander Romance* which in medieval times was falsely attributed to Callisthenes. The core of this work was formed in the reign of Ptolemy I and II of Egypt, but scholars disagree whether the earliest recension as we have it was fully formed at this period or whether it was composed some 600 years later (before 330, when

it was translated into Latin). It combines different kinds of text – Hellenistic biography, a notably unreliable historical framework, 'limping' iambic verse narrative, *chreiai* or clever sayings of the protagonist who appears as more of a trickster than a hero, an Egyptian novella based on the theological doctrine that the pharaoh is the son of Ammon, a detailed account of the founding of Alexandria with much circumstantial detail, a quasi-Utopian description of the life of the Brahmans, as well as an interview with these philosophers which sets up a contrast of the meditative and active lives. These disparate elements were combined, perhaps in Hellenistic Alexandria, into what may be the world's first novel.[2]

Despite the imaginative appeal of this narrative, the figure of Alexander was not often to the fore in the wars of his Hellenistic successors. Seleucus, who became king in Babylon and ruled the largest portion of Alexander's empire, may have devised a romance of his own life with notable similarities to the *Alexander Romance*,[3] Ptolemy was eager to secure possession of Alexander's body in his new capital of Alexandria, which Alexander had founded, while a spurious 'Will of Alexander' circulated which had the primary purpose of supporting Ptolemy's claims;[4] but later Hellenistic kings did not make much of Alexander as a model, except for Philip V, and later Mithradates VI of Pontus.[5] It was in Rome that Alexander came to figure prominently as an example and model of military prowess.[6] The first general to trade on the connection seems to have been Scipio Aemilianus, about whom a story circulated that he had, like Alexander, been sired by a serpent.[7]

In Greek writing Alexander had become not just King of Asia but, like the Persian kings, 'Great King'. The playwright Plautus in the second century BC is the first to refer to him simply as 'Alexander magnus', Alexander the Great. The title was adopted in the late first century BC by Pompey, who styled himself Pompeius magnus, brushed his hair like Alexander's, and wore a cloak that he claimed had been Alexander's. Mark Antony also saw Alexander as a model as he attempted to portray himself as a Dionysiac ruler of the East. After the Civil Wars were over, several emperors adopted Alexander symbolism to emphasise their supreme position in Rome, the first of these being Augustus.

[2] I tried to imagine the circumstances of its composition in Stoneman 2009. On its ramifications in succeeding millennia see Stoneman 2008, and on the Greek and Latin base texts see Stoneman 2011.

[3] Fraser 1996; Ogden 2017.

[4] Bosworth 2000; for another view see Heckel 1988.

[5] Bohm 1989; on Mithradates see Mayor 2010.

[6] Spencer 2002; Peltonen 2019.

[7] Ogden 2009.

Alexander was very frequently used as an exemplum for rhetorical and other purposes. The historian Livy (9. 18.8–19) insisted that if Alexander had encountered Romans he would not have had such an easy time of conquering the world. So Alexander was both a model to emulate and one to prove the superiority of the Romans, an approach to his achievement that is found also in the late antique imperial panegyrics.[8] Among Greek writers of the Roman Empire Alexander generally symbolised the glorious past now overshadowed by Roman power, while Latin writers frequently concentrated on the king's vices of anger, drunkenness and cruelty to make various philosophical points.[9]

Some emperors, notably Trajan, who planned an Eastern campaign, and Caracalla, liked to model themselves on Alexander. It is possible that the *Alexander Romance* first came to prominence in this period: perhaps there was even a 'Caracallan recension' of the work. It seems that both Plutarch and Philostratus were aware of stories that we now know from the *Romance*. But the approach of such 'second sophistic' writers to Alexander was very different from that of the *Romance*; they were not interested in fabulous tales and quirky anecdotes, but in Alexander as a heroic example of the Hellenism that had reached its peak 600 years before. Sulochana Asirvatham (Chapter 4) explores this 'Trajanic moment' in detail, and whets the appetite for her forthcoming book.

The *Romance*, as previously mentioned, was translated into Latin shortly before AD 330 by Julius Valerius Alexander Polemius, probably the same man as Flavius Polemius, consul in AD 338. The *terminus ante quem* is assured by the reference to Rome as *domina omnium gentium*, which could not have been said after the foundation of Constantinople. This work is written in an elaborate Latin which makes use of many literary allusions, and represents an attempt to raise the fabulous history of Alexander to a higher cultural level than the miscellany of folktale and fancy that was the Greek *Romance*. Several other works about Alexander appeared in the early fourth century.[10] The most significant is the *Itinerarium Alexandri Magni*, addressed to the emperor Constantius on the occasion of his departure for an Eastern campaign, and dated to the 340s. It is possible that this book is also the work of Julius Valerius, which might explain why it is rather short on usable geographical information (since Julius could not have acquired any of that from the *Romance*!).[11] Another work is the *Epitoma rerum gestarum Alexandri*, probably of the fourth or fifth century. Unlike the

[8] Peltonen 2019, 72–3. [9] Stoneman 2003b. [10] Stoneman 1999.
[11] Lane Fox 1997. See the edition by Tabacco 2000.

Itinerary, it is a historical 'breviary' of the kind produced by several authors at this period. It makes use of many sensational elements of Alexander's adventures, perhaps going back to Clitarchus, and presents a generally favourable view of the hero. The work was combined in the Metz Codex (the only MS, destroyed by bombing in World War II) with a second work, *Liber de morte Alexandri testamentoque eius*, which is based on a work that appeared in all versions of the Greek *Romance* and Julius Valerius. The two works may be by the same author; at any rate they are the products of a period (the late fourth century) which saw increasing attention to Alexander as a religious emblem. This is seen in the series of medallions or contorniates representing Alexander as New Dionysus: such talismans were attacked by the Christian author John Chrysostom (347–407). The contemporary mosaic from Souédié-Baalbek portraying the birth of Alexander (Figure 1.1) seems intended as a kind of nativity scene to counteract the similar portrayals of the upstart divinity of the Christians. Christian Djurslev (Chapter 5) investigates the very frequent appearances of Alexander in Christian literature, where familiar stories are reinterpreted to bolster Christian positions and to demonstrate their equal claims to the authority of antiquity.

Ory Amitay (Chapter 6) studies a parallel development in the early centuries AD among Jewish writers. The story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, for which a foretelling was found in the Book of Daniel, was recounted in Greek by Josephus and thus found a place in Christian writings too. The story has generally been regarded as fiction though Ben Shahar (2018) argues that Alexander probably did visit the city. Alexander was also regarded as a benefactor of the Jewish community of Alexandria, while Syriac apocalyptic texts about Alexander and other anecdotes from the *Romance* tradition entered the Talmud and formed the basis of a highly individual early Hebrew *Romance*. (Later Hebrew *Romances* are derived from the medieval Latin *Historia de Proeliis*: on which see later in this chapter.)

Two very different views of Alexander are purveyed by Orosius (early fifth century), the pupil of St Augustine, who treats Alexander and his father, Philip, as bloodthirsty tyrants, and by Fulgentius (fifth–sixth centuries), who is the first to use material from the Romance *in extenso* in his *de aetatibus mundi et hominis*. Both works were quite well known in the Middle Ages, and alongside them were two other strands, one deriving from the Latin *Letter to Aristotle about India* and the other based on the story of Alexander's encounter with the naked philosophers of India. The former was originally written in Greek, but that

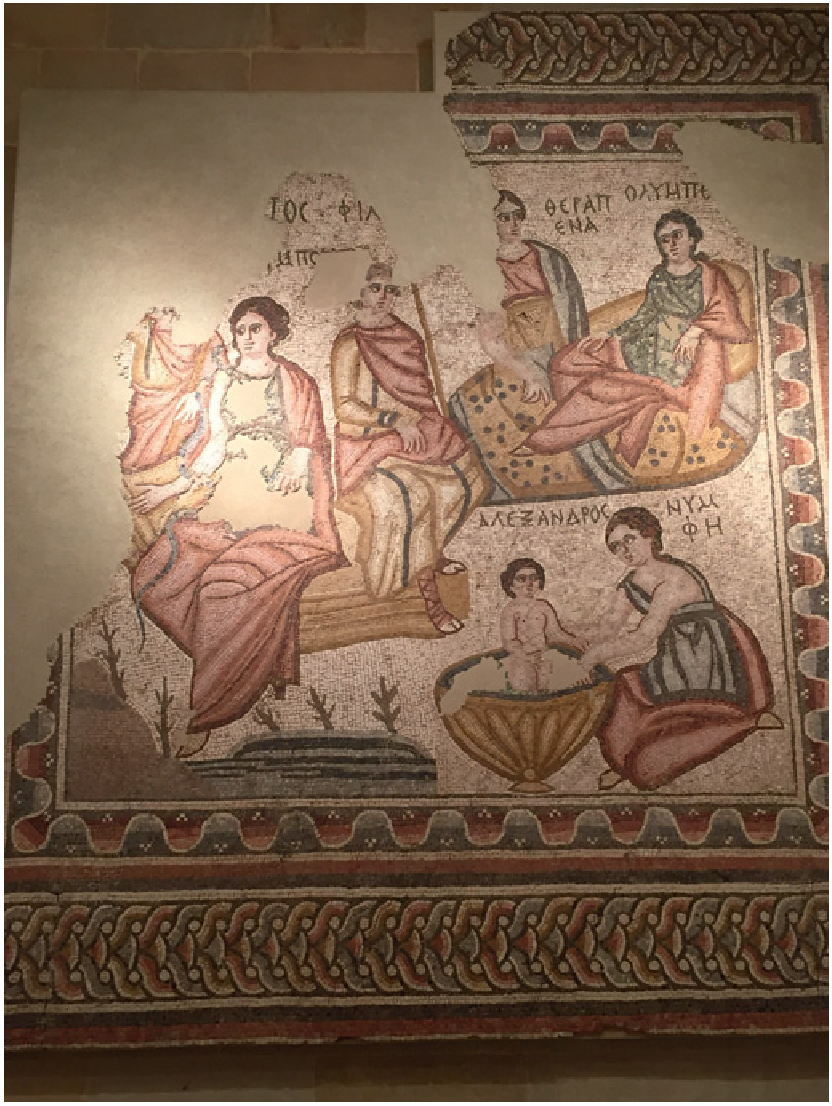


Figure 1.1 Mosaic from Souédié-Baalbek, representing the nativity of Alexander the Great. Second century AD.

version only survives in mutilated form. The Latin *Letter* was copied many times from the ninth century onwards and translated into many languages, including the Old English version found in the Beowulf manuscript. Almost the first work of English literature is thus an Alexander text. The encounter with the naked philosophers was developed into a set-piece exchange of letters between Alexander and their



Figure 1.2 'Contorniate' medallion representing Alexander the Great. Fourth century AD.

leader, Dindimus, before the eighth century. The *Romance* itself was forgotten until a copy of the Greek original was discovered in Constantinople by Leo the Archpriest of Naples on a diplomatic mission in the tenth century. His translation is included in a MS now in the cathedral library in Bamberg, which also includes the *Letter* and the *Correspondence*. Leo's translation became the basis of the immensely successful expanded Latin version known as the *Historia de Proeliis*, which exists in three recensions dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.[12]

The *Historia* made Alexander a household name throughout the Middle Ages. Beautifully illustrated MSS of the *Historia* were produced, which fed into the heroisation of Alexander as an ideal ruler, a crusader against the Eastern foe, and a type of everyman with immortal longings. Vernacular translations and developments appeared in English, German, French and other languages, notable among which is the long cycle culminating in the French *Roman d'Alexandre*. (It is estimated that the beautiful MS of the latter, Bodley 264, would have cost as much as a chapel to produce.) He was

[12] See briefly Stoneman 2008, 199–216.

revered as one of The Nine Worthies who encapsulated courtly and chivalric culture. He appears in church architecture in many depictions of his aerial flight, and also in works of wisdom literature such as the *Secretum Secretorum*. Aspects of the medieval Alexander are explored by Maud Pérez-Simon (Chapter 7) and Mark Cruse (Chapter 8), as well as Susana Torres-Prieto (Chapter 9). The more hostile tradition, based on Orosius, is tracked through various texts by Charles Russell Stone in his book *From Tyrant to Philosopher-King*.[13]

Besides these prose treatments, Alexander became the subject of two epic poems in the Middle Ages. The poem of Quilichinus of Spoleto (1236) is a versification of the third recension of the *Historia*, while the *Alexandreis* of Walter of Châtillon (probably completed in 1182) is a magnificent epic in the Virgilian style, complete with divine apparatus and a scene in Hell where the gods plot Alexander's poisoning. The narrative is heavily based on the *History* of Q. Curtius Rufus (of which there are more than 100 medieval MSS, going back to a ninth century archetype) and presents Alexander as a heroic figure whose career is forwarded by Fortune but who fails to become a Messiah: 'a five-foot grave suffices for a man who had previously found the whole world insufficient' (X. 448–50). That there is no treatment of these epic poems in this volume is a matter for regret: though good groundwork has been done, there is a wide scope here for further research and critical analysis.[14]

The Greek tradition on Alexander developed on similar but separate lines from the Latin West. Anthony Kaldellis (Chapter 10) traces this development from the foundation of Constantinople in 330 to its fall in 1453. The Greek Alexander is generally a heroic figure, a model for a number of Byzantine emperors, and his story is purveyed in long texts, in both prose and verse, as well as in cameo appearances in texts of other kinds. The final flowering of this tradition comes in a work beyond Kaldellis' chronological scope, the *Phyllada tou Megalexandrou*, published in Venice in 1680. In this text the explorer, sage and noble king conquers the whole world only to meet the common end of mortals, so that the author concludes with an evocation of 'Solomon's' words, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Again the grave is all that remains for one for whom the whole world was not enough, and the message is an explicitly Christian one.

[13] Stone 2013.

[14] For a brief discussion see Cruse (Chapter 8). There is a reliable edition of Walter by Marvin L. Colker and a good translation with introduction by R. Telfryn Pritchard. Quilichinus was edited by W. Kirsch (1971).

Meanwhile in the East Alexander's story was pursuing a separate trajectory. One version of the Greek *Romance* was translated into Armenian in the fifth century and another into Syriac in the sixth. Through the latter it became known to the Arabs and also to the Persians. As a conqueror of Persia, Alexander became a fixture in the Persian tradition. Though perceived in one aspect as a destroyer and an enemy of the Zoroastrian religion, he was also by conquest a legitimate king of Persia and thus had to be accorded a place in the epic tradition of the succession of kings. This tradition first appears in two works of the eleventh century AD, the *Darabnameh* of Tarsusi and the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi. Both drew on the Syriac version of the *Romance* (whether via a Pahlavi version is disputed) but changed Alexander's genealogy to make him the son of Philip and a Persian princess, thus the half-brother of Darius III (Dara), whom he supplanted. Alexander – Iskandar in Persian – is a heroic king who even becomes a prophet of God and visits the Ka'aba in Mecca in Ferdowsi. In Tarsusi he is accompanied on his travels by several Greek sages, notably Plato; he devotes much of his time to intellectual investigations while his victories are won by his feisty wife Burandukht. Tarsusi's picaresque tale is extravagant and often extremely funny.[15] Haila Manteghi (Chapter 12) studies the ramifications of the royal Alexander in Persian literature, while my chapter on Amir Khusraw (Chapter 13) studies a later imagining of the connection with Plato in a text which makes Alexander the central figure of a 'mirror for princes'.

The genesis of the Arabic tradition on Alexander must go back to Ghassanid times when Syriac learning reached the Arabian peninsula. Syriac texts made Alexander into an apocalyptic figure who saves the world from the forces of evil.[16] In this aspect he features under the name of Dhu'l-qarnain (Two-Horned One) in Sura 18 of the Qur'an. Under this name he also appears in several extensive Arabic romances which bear some relation to the Greek *Romance* but add immense material: these have been effectively studied and presented by Z. David Zuwiyya.[17] The perennial question has been whether there was ever an Arabic translation of the Greek *Romance*, since the latter provided the structure of the historians' accounts. Faustina Doufikar-Aerts has come as close as anyone to determining an answer in her book *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, but this is only one strand of the Arabic Alexander.[18] Doufikar-Aerts (Chapter 14) builds

[15] I especially like the visit to a magic sweet shop, where the doors lock automatically when Alexander tries to steal some sweets.

[16] Stoneman 2017. [17] Zuwiyya 2001.

[18] Doufikar-Aerts 2010; also my sketchy treatment, Stoneman 2003a.

on her earlier researches to construct a broader picture of the meanings of Alexander in the Arabic tradition, as prophet, sage (he was a pupil of Aristotle), explorer and scientist.

While Alexander remained and remains a name to conjure with in the Islamic world as far east as Afghanistan, in the West the Alexander of the *Romance* reaches his apogee in the magnificent MSS of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, and then with the invention of printing goes into a decline. The *Historia* was printed more than once, as was Quilichinus' poem, but the wider circulation of other sources, notably Q. Curtius, induced a rather different approach to the conqueror in the early modern period. I have traced some of this background in an article about Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and the *History of the World* of Walter Ralegh, where the rationalist and 'philosophical' hostile treatment of Seneca begins to take hold from Erasmus onwards.[19] My second contribution in this volume (Chapter 15) explores the most elaborate treatment of Alexander in Jacobean drama. In William Alexander's plays, a medieval sense of mutability is allied to a rather profound historical expertise: both in this author and in Ralegh, a sense of the past as an object of research begins to come to the fore.

But the use of Alexander as a figure of drama did not have to be closely allied to history, as Jon Solomon (Chapter 16) shows in his work on Alexander in opera. The conquest of India and the romance with Roxane were the most popular subjects for the Alexander operas of the eighteenth century, while the themes of magnanimity and destructive anger, deriving from the Curtian treatment of the hero with an admixture of Seneca, are the mainsprings of the plots. While these are works of entertainment in which the music is to the fore, a simple conception of 'heroism' continues to pervade these works, though that drops away after the French Revolution.

The 'heroic' Alexander continues, however, to be the dominant presentation in the historians of eighteenth-century England, Germany and France, which are discussed by Pierre Briant (Chapter 17). He shows how the conception of Alexander as a strong, good king combined with the view of him as a reformer and bearer of civilisation who was able to take on the decadent East and improve it both economically and politically. The view of Alexander as a champion of the West against the decadent East, which is usually associated with the work of Johann Gustav Droysen, was thus emerging more than a century before him.

This Alexander is also the theme of Josef Wiesehöfer's contribution (Chapter 18), in which he shows how the ideal king was present even in

[19] Stoneman 2013.

medieval German literature, while the champion of West against East is presented most spectacularly in Albrecht Altdorfer's great painting of the Battle of Issus. These views of Alexander coalesced in the work of Droysen, who placed them in a philosophical view of history that saw the triumph of the West as inevitable. Such an Alexander was grist to the mill of Prussian ideology and above all to the ideas that took hold in Germany in the 1930s. The extremity of such views has in part enabled the emergence of the scholarly tendency that emphasises the 'situatedness' of every historical interpretation of Alexander.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and Shaun Tougher (Chapter 19) exhibit a particular form of situatedness by studying the way in which homosexual culture, which until the 1960s did not dare speak its name in most contexts, has made use of Alexander and adopted him as a gay icon. The writings of Mary Renault (1905–83) and the film by Oliver Stone (2004) allowed the passions of Alexander for his own sex to come to the fore in their narratives, and enabled his image to be used by gay activists for their own purposes. This is a new intervention in the historical process by the Macedonian conqueror.

Another new intervention is that represented by the contest over Alexander's ownership between Greece and the neighbouring republic of North Macedonia. An up-to-date treatment of this subject is missing from this volume, and perhaps affairs are moving too fast to be encapsulated in a non-journalistic way. Thus the most recent judicious survey of the controversy remains Loring M. Danforth's.[20] In 2011 I found it was difficult to suggest in Greece that Alexander had not always been a hero to the Greeks (witness Demosthenes), while the erection of a large statue of the hero in Skopje was undoubtedly seen as a provocation. Tempers have cooled with the adoption of the name of North Macedonia by Greece's northern neighbour (ancient Paeonia). But one thing remains certain – new historical movements and sensitivities will emerge, which again will employ the figure of the great Macedonians to articulate their concerns.

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[20] See Danforth 2003. Guendalina Taietti has written effectively about the use of Alexander as a nationalist hero in Greece of the past two centuries (Taietti 2018).

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2 Alexander and Alexandria in Life and Legend

DOROTHY J. THOMPSON

Around the turn of the recent millennium a bronze statue was set up in Alexandria on the northern coast of Egypt. Standing at a key intersection near the Rosetta Gate on the Canopic Way of the ancient city, the statue is that of Alexander III of Macedon, seated astride his horse Bucephalus. His cloak flies behind him and in his right hand he holds a small statue of Victory (Nike). Bucephalus is placed on top of a stepped plinth of Aswan granite, so connecting the Macedonian to the land of Egypt.[1] The erection of this equestrian statue was not without controversy, for Alexander was viewed by many as a foreign conqueror of the country where he initiated yet another era of foreign rule.[2] Nevertheless, he was the founder of the city and in a Greek-style city foundation Alexander showed himself equally concerned with matters Egyptian. So in the end the argument prevailed in favour of this commemoration.

This twenty-first-century image of Alexander may serve to introduce the subject of this chapter on Alexander and his legacy in the city that he founded. In what follows we must range contrapuntally between past and present, considering events and their interpretation, the reality (insofar as this is ever to be retrieved) and the imagined, in which history enters debate with romance, and all is located within the city that Alexander founded – Alexandria, now Iskanderiya. So, in our search for Alexander, we are immediately faced by the problem not just of the ancient sources, which supposedly record historical events, but also of making sense of the *Alexander Romance* in its many different versions. As we shall find, elements from legend appear at times to play a role in ancient historical accounts in the same way as historical events have entered the *Romance*. Both the intended audience and the times in which an author writes are likely to affect the story told. In the case of Alexander in particular, history elides with legend; distinguishing the origins and impact of the varied accounts preserved is a further concern of the following discussion.

[1] For an ancient equestrian statue of Alexander as Founder, see Nikolaos of Myra in Ps.-Lib. *Progymn*. 27, with Stewart 1993: 397–400.

[2] See Halim 2002b; 2002c; 2002d; 2013: 271–2.

In the course of this chapter the main episodes considered are the brief visit of Alexander to Egypt during which he founded the city of Alexandria, the death and burial of Alexander, which in Egypt was followed by the installation of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and the fate of Alexander's tomb.

Alexander in Life

We may start with Alexander's arrival in Egypt and his foundation of Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast, a city that under his successors would become the country's capital with a new focus for Egypt replacing that to the south. Immediately we are faced with the impossibility of retrieving any straightforward account of what Alexander actually achieved in the course of his visit to Egypt, of the order of events or, indeed, of Alexander's aims and motivation. None of this can be separated out from its subsequent interpretation and embellishment. History combines with legend right from the start and the relative antiquity of surviving classical accounts in no way coincides with the reliability or otherwise of what they report. Throughout, the history of Alexander is coloured by its authors' concerns. We need to explore the different strands of the record in both time and place to try to understand the different milieux from which the accounts have emerged.[3] History therefore becomes a broader and more challenging enterprise, as the elaboration of historiography takes centre stage and an appreciation of the legendary record can on occasion illuminate the importance, if not the actual events, of Alexander's brief stay in Egypt.

Alexander of Macedon arrived in Egypt in late 332 BC on his way to conquer the Persian empire. The order of events that followed his successful invasion of this former Persian satrapy is far from clear, with ancient accounts providing a range of versions. We may start with what is regularly considered the most trustworthy of the ancient sources, that of Arrian, who writing in the second century AD based his account on the earlier records of Alexander's general Ptolemy – the son of Lagos and future ruler of Egypt – and another minor officer, Aristoboulos of Cassandreia. According to Arrian, Alexander's army arrived at the border garrison of Pelusium by both land and sea. There the Persian satrap Mazakes handed over to him control of the country. Alexander proceeded to take the city of Heliopolis in the southern Delta and from there went on to Memphis, the

[3] Cf. Erskine 2013.

capital of Egypt. In Memphis he sacrificed to other gods and to Egyptian Apis – the bull whose popular cult was based in that city – and he held (Greek-style) games and musical contests, with (we are somewhat implausibly told) key contestants arriving from Greece for these. Then, accompanied by most of his troops, he sailed downriver to the Canopic mouth of the Nile and round Lake Maria (Mareotis, modern Mariut), landing where he would found the city bearing his name. Arrian describes his choice of the spot: 'It struck him that the position was admirable for founding a city there and that it would prosper'. This was later confirmed by soothsayers; Aristander of Telmessos prophesied that 'the city would prosper in general and especially from the produce of its land'.[4] Its position, therefore, with fine natural harbours and its main gaze out to sea, back to Greece from where Alexander had come, was important from the start. But Alexandria was also founded on Egyptian soil and its success as a city was to depend on the agricultural wealth of that country – on the fertility of its soil, watered by the annual Nile flood, and on the crops it grew. Alexander had picked a good spot for his city.

The foundation of Alexandria took a traditional form. The founder performed a sacrifice and the boundary walls were laid out, marked with barley meal, and as in Greek colonial foundations of an earlier date, the agora was designed as the centre of the city. Here temples were planned – for Greek gods and for Isis. Isis, of course, was already well known to the Greek world and, as one of the few Egyptian deities with a human rather than an animal form, this goddess was more easily adopted by the Greeks.[5] In his act of foundation, Alexander set the scene for a continued Greek presence in Egypt; he also, from the start, practised an inclusive policy in relation to that country's gods, which was in striking contrast to that of the Persians, whom he supplanted.[6] With Alexandria's foundation underway and after receiving envoys from overseas, in Arrian's account Alexander was then seized by a longing (his fabled *pothos*) to visit the oracle of Ammon in Libya, in the oasis of Siwah.[7] This indeed proved a single

4 Arr. *Anab*. 3.1.1–5, 2.2; cf. Strabo 17.1.6–7.

5 See Rhodes and Osborne 2003 91.43–5 (333/332 BC), Egyptian community in Peiraeus with an Isis temple. For Isis possibly as 'lady of Yat-Wadjat', see Thompson 2012: 129, with Gorre 2009: 331 (BM 886.9). *Romance* 1.31.4, however, records Isis Nepherotes. (Unless otherwise noted, *Romance* references are to Stoneman 2007: Βίος Ἀλεξάνδρου.)

6 Diod. Sic. 1.46.4, Cambyses burns Egyptian temples; Hdt. 3.29, Cambyses murders an Apis bull; cf. Ael., *NA* 10.28, Artaxerxes Ochus murders an Apis. Such killings are probably apocryphal but the negative image is clear.

7 Arr. *Anab*. 3.3–6.1; on the Siwah expedition, see Brunt 1976: 467–80; Caneva 2016: 11–13.

event which carried multiple messages and came to affect all of those concerned.

In an expedition deep into the western desert Alexander wished, we are told, to rival the Greek legendary heroes Perseus and Herakles who had preceded him, and himself to visit Zeus-Ammon from whom in part he traced descent; he also hoped for the backing of the oracle in some form. None of the ancient accounts, differing in the reasons they report, gives any more satisfactory exploration of his motivation for what appears a somewhat foolhardy enterprise. The journey of 290 kilometres along the coast as far as Paraetonium (Mersa Matruh) was not without water, but then the troops turned inland for more than 310 kilometres through a waterless desert region. In Arrian's version the troops were fortunate in that some unexpected rain fell, attributed to divine intervention. Nevertheless the wind blew and the route sanded over, as it so often does in the desert. The army was lost in sand and did not know which way to go. To their rescue came either hissing serpents, which led them to the oracle – so Ptolemy's version – or – on the authority of Aristoboulos – two crows which the army followed as guides. So already, as is to be expected on such an extraordinary expedition in such a fantastical setting, what actually took place had become a matter of dispute. The latter version occurs more often in other accounts of this journey and birds that fly towards water in the desert have been noted elsewhere. Ptolemy's serpents in contrast seem more likely to be an Egyptian interpolation; the cobra was the royal reptile par excellence that featured on the royal headdress. In this version Alexander was here being recognised as a legitimate Egyptian pharaoh.

Alexander consulted the oracle, received the answer his heart desired and then returned. But here again Arrian has two versions. Aristoboulos had Alexander follow the same route back to the coast whereas Ptolemy had him continue on to Memphis, presumably north through the Bahariya oasis and then across the desert eastwards to the main Nile valley. In Memphis he was joined by further troops, sacrificed to Zeus the king, held a military parade and – for a second time? – games and musical contests. Alexander then put into effect a series of administrative arrangements for managing the country after his departure and, as spring arrived (331 BC), he left Egypt for Phoenicia, after what had clearly been a very crowded timetable and action-packed visit to the country. On Aristoboulos' itinerary but not that of Ptolemy, Alexander could have inspected the progress of his coastal foundation on his return from Siwah. In either case it is clear that the fulfilment of the building project for Alexandria was necessarily entrusted to others.

Had just one account of the foundation of Alexandria survived it would have been possible to present a brief but fairly coherent account. Other versions, however, exist in both classical sources and in the composite work known as the *Alexander Romance*, which is where the ancient historical accounts meet the legends of later times. When these different versions are considered, Arrian's account begins to unravel still further, as details noted by different writers obscure and complicate the narrative and what clarity there was is seen to dissipate.

Writing in the mid first century BC, the universal historian Diodorus Siculus has both more and less detail on the Egyptian episode.[8] Alexander, he records, secured Egypt without a blow and the Macedonians were welcomed because of the unpopularity of the Persians. There is not much that is different here. The greater part of his account, however, treats the expedition to Siwah. We read that on the way Alexander met with envoys from Cyrene. The journey inland through the desert took four days and a providential downpour saved the army in distress; no snakes appear in this account, but crows lead the way to the temple. There is an extended description of the oasis and at the oracle temple he recounts how Alexander was greeted as a son of Zeus. This indeed was to serve as the basis for the future recognition of Alexander's divinity, important for both Greeks and Egyptians. He was assured that his father's assassins had met due punishment and that his own deeds would provide proof of his divine birth. He left happy. It was only after Siwah that Alexander founded Alexandria, well situated between the coast and the marsh to catch the summer winds, a city to be built with strong walls and fine buildings, including an enormous palace. Diodorus finally describes the flourishing city of Alexandria of his own day. Leaving others in charge of the city's construction, Alexander settled affairs in the country and left.

The geographer Strabo, writing under Augustus, also provides a detailed account of Alexandria in his own day. He records the city's foundation by Alexander and here for the first time comes mention of an existing settlement at Rhakotis, which was incorporated into the city.[9] The lines of the city, containing a large number of streets, had to be marked out with barley meal since the white earth (chalk?) that was regularly used for this ran out. When birds consumed the meal, this was interpreted as a good omen for the city's future prosperity. Strabo also comments on its advantageous

[8] Diod. Sic. 17.49–53.

[9] For Rhakotis (demotic r^{c}-*kt*), simply meaning 'building site', see Chauveau 1997: 77; 1999; Depauw 2000.

location, describing the main features of the city and recording just a few historical events.[10]

Quintus Curtius Rufus, writing in Latin in the late first to the early second century AD, like Diodorus probably based much of his work on Cleitarchus (no longer extant). His is a more rhetorical and colourful account of Alexander in Egypt. When the Persian satrap Mazakes came across the river at Memphis to surrender, he brought with him large sums of cash and all the furniture from the palace for Alexander. At this stage Alexander went off on a Nile cruise to the south to visit the kingdom, where he made no changes to the traditional administration. Wishing to visit the oracle of Juppiter Ammon (the account is in Latin), he then sailed down to the coast at Lake Mareotis from where he travelled to Siwah. The Cyrenean envoys appear again and the description of the journey inland resembles that of Diodorus, with rainstorms and crows. The oasis too is fully described, and the visit to the temple with its barque-oracle. Alexander was hailed as son of Juppiter and, in flattery, assured that he would rule the world. His father's murderers had been punished and Alexander would prove invincible for the rest of his life. In this account Alexander now ordered his men to address him as son of Juppiter, which the Macedonians did not like (and the author himself disapproved of). There follows the return to the coast and the foundation of Alexandria between the lake and the sea with a circuit of eighty stades. The city's circumference was marked with barley, but birds came and ate this up.[11] Alexander's seers conveniently explained a potentially bad omen away by claiming that this meant that many would come to the city, which would serve as a source of sustenance for many lands. Others were left in charge of the building and Alexander returned to Memphis where he made administrative arrangements and then moved on.[12]

Despite the jumbled chronology for the events in Egypt and for the foundation of Alexandria, some elements emerge from all accounts so far – the favourable location picked by Alexander, the choice of Alexandria as the name for his city on the coast, the scale of the enterprise and, finally, the implication that its fulfilment was left to others.[13] The *Alexander Romance* may help to fill out the picture.

If one accepts, as indeed seems most plausible, that many of the elements of the *Romance* involving Alexander's Egyptian connection date from the

[10] Strabo 17.1.6–10.
[11] Cf. Strabo 17.1.6; Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 26.5–6, reports much the same, as also for Siwah.
[12] Curt. 4.7–8.
[13] Alexander's father Philip had used his own name when he re-founded Crenides as Philippi.

early Ptolemaic period, then a focus on Alexander in this context allows the reader to enter into contemporary Ptolemaic concerns as well, sometimes as identifying historical events.[14] Not only was Alexander acceptable in Egypt compared to his Persian predecessors in his attitude towards Egyptian gods and customs, but the composition of a fictive paternity served to connect him to the last Egyptian pharaoh, Nectanebo II (Nekht-hor-heb), who had fled to Nubia when the Persians came.[15]

So, in the *Romance* we encounter a tale of magical schemes in the face of the barbarian (i.e. Persian) threat and the flight of Nectanebo to the Macedonian court at Pella, where he presents himself as an Egyptian prophet with powers to foretell the future. There, in her husband Philip's absence, Nectanebo makes a big impression on queen Olympias. In despair, since to date she has failed to get pregnant, the queen consults this prophet. Working his magic, Nectanebo first sends her a dream of a night-time visit from the Libyan god Ammon and then, predicting a serpent in her room, ends up in her bed himself, disguised as the god with a serpent-skin cloak and wearing a fleece with gilded horns at its head. The result of course is the birth of Alexander, whom Philip is finally persuaded to acknowledge as his son, while at the same time acknowledging a divine paternity.[16]

This and similar accounts of Alexander's birth have a long tradition though emphases may differ. In the seventh-century Syriac version of the *Romance*, Nectanebo flees to Macedon as a result of a treasonable plot against him by the Egyptian gods. There, when called on to give advice to Philip and his wife Olympias on their relationship, he makes the queen pregnant disguised as Ammon. Alexander is born under a favourable star, and in Egypt he claims to be Nectanebo's son.[17] Later the Iranian scholar al-Bīrūnī (AD 973–1048) preserves an abbreviated version of the Nectanebo episode in his Arabic *History of India*, which may have come through a Byzantine chronicler. Here, as was standard in later versions, Macedonia has supplanted Pella as the place of Alexander's birth and Alexander is held responsible for the death of Nectanebo, struck down

[14] For instance, Stoneman 1991: 14; 2011: 2; on the *Romance* and Egypt, Jouanno 2002: 57–125.

[15] So Diod. Sic. 16.51.1. Nectanebo II was ejected by the Persians in 343 BC, more than a dozen years after the birth of Alexander (in 356 BC), but chronology counts for little in the creation of legends.

[16] *Romance* 1.4–13. For Alexander's nativity see Stoneman 2008: 6–21; for snakes see also Ogden 2009; 2013a: 280; Barbantini 2014.

[17] Budge 1889 and 1896, Syriac and Ethiopic versions; Monferrer-Sala 2011: 60–1. In the later Ethiopic version the magician has become Beḳṭânîs, Olympias Lêmbayâs, and Eskender throws his father to his death from the top of a mountain (Budge 1896: 3; Kotar 2011: 169).

while observing the stars.[18] For Nectanebo the magician was a skilled astrologer too.[19] In the somewhat earlier (and even briefer) Arabic version of Eutychius, the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria (AD 877–940), the erstwhile pharaoh's name is given as Šānāq.[20] Nectanebo, however, returns in the thirteenth-century Arabic *History of Dynasties* of Bar Hebraeus, where the emphasis is primarily on his expertise in celestial matters, and where Alexander has become the Two-Horned One (Dhū l-Qarnayn).[21] It is the adultery of Olympias and Nectanebo, whose union resulted in Alexander's birth, that features in Malalas, in al-Bīrūnī and just possibly in a mid thirteenth-century Spanish Arabic *History of the Two-Horned One*.[22] The taint of Alexander's bastardy regularly attracted opprobrium in medieval French accounts.[23] The *Romance* was clearly enjoyed by those of many different religions and creeds, but the value codes of different audiences could effect how its stories were told.

The emphasis had changed in later Arabic versions of the Egyptian connection in Alexander's birth; this is even more the case in Hebrew versions of the *Romance*. In one group of Hebrew tales King Philip of Macedon is presented as the king of Egypt. His wife Olympias has become Galopatra or Golofira, seduced by the wizard Bildad, who shares his name with one of the comforters of Job. Bildad comes to the queen disguised not as Ammon but as the god Digonia with one silver and one golden horn. Philip realises the fraud and searches out Bildad, who flees to a cave, where he dies. The queen wished to kill her illegitimate son but Philip adopts him, and this son finally inherits Philip's throne.[24]

Back in Egypt, though all seemed lost a prophecy was made known that 'this king who has fled will return to Egypt not as an old man but as a youth'.[25] The recent publication of an Egyptian demotic text prophesying the future coming of a young falcon – that is, of Horus as pharaoh (perhaps

[18] See Voigt 2016: 26–7, 67–81, with translation; cf. *Alexander Romance* recension β.

[19] Stoneman 2008: 21–4.

[20] Voigt 2016: 73–5; cf. Sarnāḳōs, as transliterated in the Syriac version (*c.*AD 600) by Budge 1889: 147. The name of the pharaoh-magician Nectanebo comes in many forms. For Beḳṭânîs see n. 17; in the thirteenth-century Old Norse *Alexanders Saga*, as in the fourteenth-century Middle English verse romance *Kyng Alisaunder*, he is Neptanabi/Neptanebus (Jónsson 1925: 3, 43; Ashurst 2011; 263–6; Ashurst and Vitti 2011: 318); for Bildad see n. 24.

[21] Voigt 2016: 75–7, with text, translation and discussion.

[22] Zuwiyya 2001; Voigt 2016: 82–5.

[23] Harf-Lancner 2011: 202–3; cf. 215, the Anglo-Norman Thomas of Kent and the thirteenth-century *Roman d'Alexandre* are alone in recording the magician Nectanebo as father of Alexander without further comment.

[24] See Dönitz 2011: 35, in her Type 3 versions of the Hebrew *Romance*. For Bildad see Job 2.11.

[25] *Romance* 1.3.5, cf. 1.34.3, inscribed on a statue of Nectanebo.

as Alexander) – illustrates the milieu from which this later prophecy comes.[26] Indeed, a number of the elements in the *Romance* account of Alexander's birth and life are Egyptian. The last native pharaoh of Egypt, Nectanebo II, takes his place alongside the Libyan god Ammon and snakes, the royal reptile of Egypt. The snakes, in contrast, that Olympias played with were those involved in Bacchic rites.[27] As so often in Hellenistic Egypt where this legend first developed, the record allows for a dual interpretation, one that can be understood by Greeks and Egyptians alike.

Any clear sense of geographical grasp or order of events is lacking in the *Alexander Romance*. According to this colourful account, Alexander reached Egypt via Sicily and Carthage. From there he crossed Libya to Siwah, where he visited the oracle of Ammon. Here in a vision he received assurance that Ammon was his father; in gratitude he repaired the sanctuary and gilded the god's wooden statue, which he dedicated with an inscription: 'Alexander set this up for his father, the god Ammon.'[28] He then received an oracle from Ammon in the guise of an old man telling him to found a city beyond the isle of Proteus (known to Greeks from Homer as the old man of the sea connected with Pharos island).[29] The account here is not so different from that of Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander*; there, however, it is in a dream rather than an oracle that Alexander receives the vision of a hoary old man, who quotes Homer on the island of Pharos, as he sought the site for his city.[30]

And so in the *Romance* the scene is set for the foundation of Alexandria. With the oracle from Ammon to guide them, the future city was to be located along the coast. After some debate over the size of the new city, its outline was agreed. Those who aided in planning are named;[31] of these Cleomenes of Naucratis is the only individual otherwise known.[32] Stone

[26] Ryholt 2002: 237–8, on P. Carlsberg temple inv. 10.490; cf. Jasnow 1997, on possible Egyptian (demotic) echoes in the *Romance*. For Nectanebo as a falcon-god see Thompson 2012, 19.

[27] Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 2, an account sharing elements with the *Romance* version but without Nectanebo or horoscopes. For the snake motif see Stoneman 2008: 7.

[28] *Romance* 1.30.4, cf. text of Stoneman 2007: 180. The cult object of the Ammon temple is elsewhere described as encrusted with emeralds and other gems and carried on a decorated sacred barque, cf. Diod. Sic. 17.50.6, a wooden statue; Curt. 4.7.23, a rounded object (*umbilicus*).

[29] *Romance* 1.29–30; Hom. *Od*. 4.384–6. On Pharos (with its Ptolemaic lighthouse), see Strabo 17.1.9; Empereur 1998a: 43; el-Abbadi 2004.

[30] Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 26.2–3; Hom. *Od*. 4.354–5.

[31] From *Romance* 1.31.6, 8–9, the names (though not the individuals) Deinokrates, Eurylochos, Heron, Krateros, Melanthios and Noumenios are all known to Hellenistic Egypt; Hyponomos is otherwise unknown. The addition of ethnics – as in Deinokrates, the Rhodian or Krateros, the Olynthian – lend what may be a spurious credibility.

[32] *Romance* 1.31.9, together with Krateros from Olynthos, Heron from Libya and his brother Hyponomos; cf. Arr. *Anab*. 3.5.4. For Cleomenes (here *mēchanikos*), see Burstein 2008; Baynham 2015.

foundations and underground canals were recommended – advice clearly based on how the city in fact was built.[33] The *Romance* picks up the record of fine meal used to mark out the line of the walls which was swiftly gobbled up by birds.[34]

Later versions bring different elements to this episode. In the seventh-century Syriac version it was against the advice of his tutor Aristotle that Alexander ever founded the city.[35] Arabic versions of the foundation story introduce yet more marvels to the tale. So in the tenth-century version of Abū l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī ibn-Masᶜūdī (more often known simply as al-Masᶜūdī) some of the same elements of the story survive but much has changed. In his work *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* this Arab historian and geographer, who himself spent time in Egypt, recounts a version of the foundation story, picking up on earlier elements but introducing a whole new dimension to the story.[36] Alexander was searching for a spot that was healthy, fertile and well irrigated.[37] Arriving at the site of his new city he found remains of a vast structure with many columns of marble and one high column with Himyarite writing on it recording the name and moralistic words of the individual who put it up (§827).[38] He collected blocks for building the city and the workmen marked out the lines of the foundations not by sprinkling flour, but by stakes with ropes between. These culminated at a marble column in front of Alexander's tent. On the top of this column a deep-sounding bell controlled the movements of the ropes when it swung; smaller bells attached all along the ropes allowed the simultaneous placing of the blocks along the line. With an eye on the horoscope, Alexander was waiting for the best time to start, but he fell asleep and a crow came and sat on the rope controlling the bell. The elaborate system moved into action and the workmen obeyed the sound of all the bells. Alexander awoke. God, he claimed, had thwarted his plans. The future of the city he had hoped would last was now in doubt (§828–9).

Building went ahead, but once the foundations were laid each night monsters emerged from the depths of the sea and destroyed the day's work. In despair at what appeared to presage the immediate failure of his city,

33 See Empereur 1998a: 46, 50–60, 125–43; Ogden 2013a: 286–7, on the foundation legend.

34 *Romance* 1.32.4, wheat meal; cf. Strabo 17.1.6; Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 26.5; Arr. *Anab*. 3.2.1; Curt. 4.8.6, all with barley meal.

35 Budge 1889: 42 (Syriac version 1.33).

36 Masᶜūdī 1965: 313–19, §827–43.

37 Alexandria's temperate climate is also stressed by the tenth-century Persian geographer Ibn al-Faqīh in his epitome *Muḫtaṣar kitāb al-buldan* (*Precise Book of Lands*), where a large temple of the Greeks is also described, Voigt 2016: 133–5.

38 For Al-Ṣaᶜb Dhulqarnayn (Alexander) as Himyarite (Yemeni) king in a medieval Arabic text, see Zuwiyya 2011b: 94.

Alexander set his mind to devising a stratagem. One night's serious thought resulted in the construction of a large oblong box with watertight windows of glass along its sides and weights below. In this Alexander and two of his scribes descended to the bottom of the sea, where they found demons with human form and monstrous heads equipped with picks, saws and hooks, like the workmen above with their building tools. These they drew and copied carefully on parchment before rising again to the surface. Alexander then had lifelike copies of these figures made in metal and stone which he placed along the shore. The following night when the monsters emerged from the depths, finding themselves faced with images of themselves, they sped back to the waters not to re-emerge (§§830–1).

Alexander's troubles were not yet over. The city was built with vaults and subterranean passages, with covered streets and seven sets of walls. The gleam of the marble of its buildings lit up the city at night and an inscription set above the gates by its founder thanked God, master of all lands, for his bounty and grace; it also foretold the future of the city (§§832–3). But then again, according to some accounts, the monsters and sea creatures returned and each night carried off inhabitants of the city. When Alexander heard of this he set up eighty-cubit obelisks on pedestals of bronze with images and inscriptions at their base to frighten them off (§834).

At the end of the ninth century the Muslim geographer Ya^{c}qubi had recorded two obelisks in Alexandria resting on copper crustaceans and covered in ancient inscriptions. These obelisks were still standing in al-Mas^{c}ūdī's day, and they have interesting lives. Originally they stood in Heliopolis, set up by Tuthmosis III in the fifteenth century BC and taken over by Ramses II in the thirteenth century. In 13 BC they were brought to Alexandria under the Roman emperor Augustus to stand in front of his Caesareum. At the base of each, four large bronze crabs wedged the obelisks firmly into place. Just one of these crabs survives. The two obelisks themselves left the city in the nineteenth century AD.[39] One of these now stands in Central Park, New York, while 'Cleopatra's Needle' adorns London's Embankment. So here, on a pattern standard from Herodotus on, we have the origin of al-Mas^{c}ūdī's account.[40]

Crustaceans recur. Al-Mas^{c}ūdī describes how the famous lighthouse of Alexandria (the Pharos), perhaps set up by Alexander, stood on a base

[39] Empereur 1998a: 117–23 (cf. 118 for illustration). Butler 1978: 276–9, attempts to make sense of the various Arab accounts of crabs (both around the obelisks and a monster glass crab beneath the Pharos) by suggesting the use of obsidian; no evidence for this survives.

[40] Zuwiyya 2001: 30, stresses the medieval Arab fascination with building structures and metallurgy visible in this account.

made of glass in the form of a crustacean (§836–7). Still earlier, Gregory of Tours in the sixth century, picked up by Bede in the early eighth, had reported that the Pharos was supported on four huge crabs.[41] Crustaceans, we find, came in varying numbers and clearly formed a feature of the city from the early Roman period. And so, along with these, not only the fabled Pharos with its statues and mirror, but also the obelisks of the Caesareum became associated with the city's founder.

In the Greek *Romance* snakes rather than underwater creatures caused problems for those building the new city. Work was proceeding apace but the appearance of a large serpent, a *drakōn*, terrified the workmen. So Alexander had this serpent slain and turned into an object of cult as the good demon (Agathos Daimon) of the city. The different quarters of the city were now laid out, marked by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet (alpha to epsilon). The importance of Alexander's city cult was endorsed when, during the building of the sanctuary, a great many snakes were dislodged from beneath a block and slithered off to take up residence in the foundations of the houses. Through their local cult as 'good demons' (*agathoi daimones*) these snakes came to symbolise the city itself.[42] So when the 'Potter's Oracle', an Egyptian apocalyptic text that circulated in Greek, foretells the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the eventual downfall of the 'city by the sea' in favour of the former capital of Egypt appears in the following words:

> Then Agathos Daimon will abandon the city that has been founded and enter Memphis, and the city of the foreigners . . . will be deserted.

The actual foundation of Alexandria was celebrated in the presence of Alexander himself. The *Romance* even preserves a date that may well be historical: 25 Tybi, which in 331 BC would have fallen on 7 April.[43] When the time of the new moon in January is recorded in some versions of the

[41] *De cursu stellarum* 1.65 (fol. 77). Fuller discussion in Empereur 1998a: 82–7; 1998b; Stoneman 2008: 62–5. For the historic Pharos, inaugurated under Ptolemy II, see Strabo 17.1.6. Amm. Marc. 22.16.9 ascribes construction of the Pharos to Cleopatra. It was ascribed to Alexander in many *Romance* versions; see Zuwiyya 2011b: 93–4, 101 (Aragonese), mirror and white walls, 110, spiral-shaped.

[42] *Romance* 1.32.9–13; in a further version of 32:12 (Stoneman 2007: 189) the *agathoi daimones* are specified as non-poisonous snakes. See Fraser 1972: 1.34; Empereur 1998a: 57–60, for city quarters; Burstein 1985: 136–9, no. 106.28–30, cf. 36–8, for Potter's Oracle; Fraser 1972: 1.209–11; Ogden 2013a: 287–309; 2013b, for *agathoi daimones* and other snakes. The Egyptian god Shaï (Quaegebeur 1975) may well lurk behind this and other snake tales; see Stoneman 2008: 56; Barbantini 2014: 227; Kłęczar 2014: 392.

[43] As convincingly argued by Bagnall 1979, cf. Jouanno 2002: 68; Wojciechowska and Nawotka 2014: 50–1.

Romance, that is according to the later calendar adopted in Roman Egypt. For many reasons April, not long before Alexander left the country, seems the more plausible date – an equivalence that depends on acceptance of a Ptolemaic origin for at least this section of the *Romance*. However, as always with the *Romance*, many details preserved in the text are not universally accepted, and often rightly so.[44]

Anachronistically Alexander is further connected in the *Romance* narrative with the Alexandrian cult of Sarapis.[45] Dreams, visions and prophecy all play their part in the account, picked up in outline by the tenth-century Persian geographer Ibn al-Faqīh in his *Muḫtaṣar kitāb al-buldan* (*Precise Book of Lands*).[46] The cult statue described in the Greek *Romance* was that of three-headed Cerberus rather than that of the anthropomorphic god Sarapis, whose cult originated in that of the Memphite bull Osiris-Apis known to Greeks as Osorapis. As an underworld god from the Hellenic world, Cerberus here presumably alludes to the underworld side – the Osiris aspect – of the new Alexandrian god. For the *Romance* it was of no consequence that it was only under the early Ptolemies that Sarapis was established in the city. The notable features of a city, or even a period, have a natural tendency to become attached to the known name of that city's founder.

The final event of Alexander's visit to be considered is his coronation, an event recorded only in the *Romance*. Here his coronation, which would surely strengthen his role as Horus, the new pharaoh of Egypt, is placed after an encounter with Sarapis, when he 'made haste to leave for Egypt'.[47] Alexandria, we may note, was never truly considered part of Graeco-Roman Egypt, but rather lay 'next to Egypt' (Greek: *Alexandreia pros Aigyptōi*; Latin: *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*).[48] So in the *Romance* version Alexander took his army straight to Memphis, then the capital, where 'the Egyptians placed him on the throne of Hephaestus as king of Egypt'.[49] Whether or not such a formal coronation ever took place in the temple of Ptah (Hephaestus), it is clear from surviving monuments and texts that Alexander came to be accepted as pharaoh in Egypt. He (or his representatives) embarked on a programme of temple building, and the Macedonian was depicted on temple walls in the traditional guise of

44 For example Grieb 2014: 219, rejects any specific date.

45 *Romance* 1.33; cf. Stoneman 2008: 60–2. See Fraser 1972: 1.246–9, a clear and helpful discussion; on the Alexandrian Serapeum see McKenzie 2010: 53–5; Sabottka 2008; Bergmann 2010.

46 Voigt 2016: 133–40. A large temple (*haykal*) of the Greeks stands in for the Serapeum and the importance of the city's temperate climate for its future success is stressed, as earlier in Diod. Sic. 17.52.2; cf. al-Mas^{c}ūdī 1965: 313, §827.

47 *Romance* 1.34.1.

48 See Fraser 1972: 1.108–9; Clarysse 2000: 29.

49 *Romance* 1.34.

pharaoh.[50] Some have even tried to give a date to his coronation. A recent discussion, for instance, places this before the foundation of Alexandria (25 Tybi) on 1 Tybi of 331 BC, the date for the crowning of the new falcon in the Edfu festival calendar of Ptolemaic date.[51] Ignoring the order of events preserved in the *Romance*, this might lend authority to Ptolemy's version in Arrian of the army's return from Siwah directly to Memphis rather than via Alexandria. Arrian, however, makes no mention of any coronation and the first Egyptian ceremony of coronation for a Greek pharaoh otherwise recorded is that in 196 BC of Ptolemy V, known from the Rosetta Stone.[52]

The attempt to recover events of the past by selectively combining different versions is a dangerous approach to history. What is more important, probably more interesting too, is to investigate the elements of these different accounts which must have been acceptable to their readers at the time. Fake news always has its audience and it is the audience that we also need to know.

On occasion, however, contemporary documents help to fill out the picture. The recent (re)discovery and decipherment of a bilingual dedication from the oasis of Bahriya which lies south of Siwah on the route back to the Nile Valley (and Memphis) has for the first time demonstrated in its hieroglyphic record that Alexander was granted the full five names of an Egyptian pharaoh.[53] The absence of all names had previously been taken as a reason to reject the *Romance* account of Alexander's coronation.[54] At the very least this dedication, which is not precisely dated, implies an Egyptian acceptance of Alexander as pharaoh.[55] This is not inconsistent with an actual coronation. The wording of the Greek inscription is still more interesting: 'King Alexander to Ammon (his) father' is what it reads, closely repeating the words preserved in the *Romance* on the dedication made by Alexander in the oracle temple at Siwah.[56]

Before moving on, we may briefly pause to consider Alexander's connection with snakes. On 12 February 2017, in its fashion section, the *Daily News, Egypt* reported as follows on a new collection named 'Alexandria':

> A lot of the motifs revolve around snakes, which used to be a symbol for the great Alexander. The snake has always been a solid part of jewellery design in the modern local heritage.

[50] For example Schäfer 2007; 2014: 159–68; Ladynin 2014: 223–6; Pfeiffer 2014: 96.

[51] Wojciechowska and Nawotka 2014: 52–3, with Derchain-Urtel 1986: 530.

[52] Thompson 2012: 136–9.

[53] Bosch-Puche 2008, 33–4; 2013; 2014a; cf. 2014b for the Luxor temple.

[54] Burstein 1991.

[55] From the Greek letter forms it has been dated to the late fourth or early third century BC.

[56] Bosch-Puche 2008: 37–8; cf. *Romance* 1.30.4.

This connection, as already noted, derives from the *Romance*, where at various points of the legend in both Macedon and Egypt snakes herald the divinity of Alexander and the good fortune of the city he founded. The connection, however, was not always so favourable and in the Jewish tradition snakes play a very different role in the foundation of Alexandria.

In Ptolemaic Egypt Jews were settled in Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside from early on and particularly from the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who following the Maccabean revolt allowed Onias and his followers to settle in the Delta city of Leontopolis.[57] It was probably among these urban settlers that there first arose the stories about Alexander and the Jews that survive in later versions. Josephus, writing under Roman rule in the first century AD, has Alexander invite Jews to settle in the city; he held them in high esteem and he gave them privileged rights.[58] Again, in a tendency encountered before, issues of later times – here the citizen rights of the Jews – were written back to Alexander.

Later Talmudic material preserves a foundation story of the city, in which Alexander brought the bones of the prophet Jeremiah to Alexandria for reburial there. Jeremiah, according to this account, was popular among Egyptians since he prayed on their behalf against 'the monsters and crocodiles in the Nile which used to kill them'.[59] So for Jews, Jeremiah seems to have played much the same role as for Egyptians did Horus the child, whose statue standing on crocodiles and holding sway over snakes and scorpions was a well-known feature of Egyptian magical practice.[60] A similar account of Jeremiah's popularity and the reburial by Alexander of the bones of the prophet is preserved already in the Christian account of Ps.-Epiphanius from the third century AD. Alexander here not only brought Jeremiah's bones to the site of Alexandria where he buried them in a (magical) circle, but he also introduced from Argos some special snakes called *argolaoi* to fight against the local Egyptian asp.[61] His city

[57] Jos. *Ap*. 2.42–7, under Ptolemies I and II. See Fraser 1972: 1.35, 54–6, 83. On Jewish emphasis in the eighth-century γ recension of the *Romance* and a probable Alexandrian origin traced back to Ptolemy I, see Stoneman 1994: 41–5; 2008: 51–2, 57–9, 194–5.

[58] Joseph. *AJ* 12.8; *BJ* 2.478; *Ap*. 2.35, 72; see further Stoneman 1994: 39–45. For the Delta quarter as that for Alexandrian Jews see Joseph. *BJ* 2.495.

[59] See *Midrash Aggadah* II to Numbers 30:15, a twelfth-century compilation of (mostly) earlier exegetical material discussed by Kłęczar 2014: 394–5; the story also occurs with Alexander's visit to Jerusalem in recension γ (eighth century) of the Greek *Romance* (Dönitz 2011: 25–6) and in Syriac texts (Monferrer-Sala 2011: 52). The relationship between the Greek *Romance* and rabbinic sources remains problematic.

[60] For example Thompson 2012: plate iii.

[61] Kłęczar 2014: 397: *Prophetarum vitae fabulosae* (ed. Schermann 1907) 9.12 (also in the seventh century *Chronicon Paschale*, Dindorf p. 293); cf. *Suda* s.v. *argolai*. See Stoneman 1994: 46–7;

would thus be protected both by the presence of the remains of one who had power over hostile creatures from the Nile and also by asp-fighting snakes from outside the country.

Jewish versions of the *Romance* pick up on other elements of the legend of the foundation of Alexandria.[62] First, even before the story of the foundation is told, in the course of a prophetic dream Alexander meets up with the local god Sarapis on a mountain surrounded by twelve water springs. He asks the god for protection for his new city and enquires about his own fate and time of death. Work started on the foundations of the city and birds flocked in to the site. Then a stork came and ate up all the birds, which Alexander took to foretell the destruction of his city. The priests and seers of Egypt met with Alexander and reinterpreted the omen. This was rather a sign of his city's future success, for many cities would live from it. Alexander was thus encouraged and work could continue.

With these Christian and Jewish accounts much has changed from earlier Greek accounts. Prophetic dreams and omens, the stuff of legends, are essential to both. In the Greek version of the *Romance* Sarapis enters the story late in the day; in the medieval Jewish versions this Alexandrian god plays a more prominent role, standing at the start of the foundation story. With Jeremiah's bones a biblical element is introduced to the legend, possibly originating from within the Ptolemaic Jewish community. In both versions Alexander is portrayed as misunderstanding the significance of the birds – in Greek versions they ate up the barley meal; they were themselves consumed by a stork in medieval accounts – but those who put him right with alternative, more favourable, interpretations are not the same. Earlier it was a Greek soothsayer – Aristander according to Arrian – or just interpreters in the *Romance* account, who encouraged Alexander; later local experts played this part – Egyptian priests and seers. The input of different peoples and traditions is charted in the various legends, which change the order of events and emphasis depending on the context of their circulation. Finally, then, the snakes. In the Greek *Romance* the large serpent adopted as the Agathos Daimon and the host of smaller snakes, the *agathoi daimones*, came to protect the city. In contrast, in the Jewish tradition, they were generally considered hostile creatures. Snakes required

Ogden 2013b: 243–4; Barbantini 2014: 228–32. Argos, the reputed origin of the *argolaoi*, was (in Greek legend) the final home of Danaus, mythical brother of Aegyptus.

[62] See Stoneman 2008: 49–59, with 235–6; Klęczar 2014: 395–6, based on two medieval Jewish versions: London, Jews' College MS 145 (twelfth century) and Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Héb. 671.5 (twelfth and thirteenth centuries). Sarapis (identified with Joseph the son of Jacob) is also present in the Syriac version, I.31–2, ed. Budge 1889: 39–42.

elimination for the success of the new foundation. The bones of the prophet Jeremiah and snakes introduced from elsewhere were needed here to provide protection for Alexandria. And so in application of an ophidic rule we can measure how different versions of the *Alexander Romance* reflect the diverse input and concerns of different audiences.

Alexander in Death

The foundation of Alexandria was, as already noted, soon followed by Alexander's departure in his pursuit of Darius and conquest of the former Persian Empire. In early spring 331 BC, he quit Egypt never to return in his lifetime. He was only thirty-two when on his return from India in 323 BC he died quite suddenly in Babylon. While Alexander's generals negotiated the future of his empire, the Conqueror's corpse was embalmed. Then, over the next two years, an elaborately decorated hearse was prepared to bear his body to its final resting place.[63] But where Alexander's tomb should be was disputed. Perhaps he was to be buried along with other Macedonian kings back home at Aegae, or in Siwah where the oracle had proclaimed his divinity.[64] In the event, Ptolemy son of Lagus, one of Alexander's generals, made sure the cortege came to Egypt. He thereby gained an important talisman for the country he had taken in the carve-up of territory that followed Alexander's death. The military escort Ptolemy sent has rightly been described as involved in a hijack and shortly after this was followed by Ptolemy's successful opposition to the invasion of Egypt by Perdiccas, a rival general. The possession of the embalmed Alexander played a key role in the establishment of the Ptolemaic kingdom.[65]

According to Diodorus Siculus, Alexandria was to be the final destination for Alexander's coffin, but an initial stay in Memphis, as reported by others, seems likely.[66] After all, the new Greek capital of Egypt on the coast was under construction at the time, while Memphis still served as the administrative centre for the new regime. Just when the body was transferred to Alexandria remains unclear, but once it had been relocated there, there Alexander remained.[67] In 404 BC Ptolemy finally adopted the title of

[63] Diod. Sic. 18.26–8. [64] Paus. 1.6.3, Aegae; Curt. 10.5.4, 'Ammon'.

[65] See Erskine 2002: 167–76.

[66] Diod. Sic. 18.28.3–4; *Marm. Par*. under 322/1 BC and Paus. 1.6.3, Memphis; cf. *Romance* 3.34. See Fraser 1972: 2.31–3, n. 79; Thompson 2012: 99.

[67] Curt. 10.10.20, after a few years. Paus. 1.7.1, under Ptolemy II. Fraser 1972: 2.32, n. 79, argues for an early transfer; cf. Caneva 2016: 39–42, possibly at the same time as the change of capital.

king (*basileus*), and as the dynasty became embedded Alexander played his part. In what was common Greek practice, cult was probably offered him as founder (*ktistēs*) of the city from an early date.[68] Under Ptolemy I, however, an official state cult of Alexander was set up, and reign by reign successive Ptolemies were added to what became, for the first time, a fully developed Greek dynastic cult.[69] The eponymous priest of the deified Alexander and the Ptolemies was used to designate the year and Alexander, recognised at Siwah as son of Zeus (the Libyan god Ammon, identified with the Egyptian Amun), served to validate the Ptolemies as living gods in a cult more fully developed in Egypt than elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. And so when, probably in 278 BC, Ptolemy II established a dynastic festival held every four years – known as the Ptolemaieia – to honour his parents, Alexander had pride of place in the section of the procession commemorating the gods. A golden image of the god, with two goddesses – Nike (Victory) and Athena – at his side, was mounted on a float drawn by real elephants (recalling perhaps the gold staters minted by Ptolemy I, which featured Alexander in a chariot drawn by four elephants).[70] Allusions to his conquests and especially his Eastern exploits were everywhere to be seen in other sections of the display.[71] So, writing under the patronage of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the poet Theocritus portrayed his patron among the immortals, seated on a throne in the hall of Zeus with Alexander to his side and facing them Herakles, to whom both traced their ancestry.[72] Down on earth in Alexandria, shrines to Alexander were found throughout the city, and the survival of statues forms evidence of his popularity.[73]

Under Ptolemy IV Philopator the tomb of Alexander was incorporated in a somewhat grander royal burial complex, known alternatively as the Soma (body) or Sema (burial mound).[74] Here, standing in the palace quarter, the complex was the centre for the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies.[75] The form of this complex is nowhere recorded, though it possibly stands behind later descriptions of Alexandrian locations. Thus, when in the early second century AD Achilles Tatius describes the area of

[68] Fraser 1972: 1.212; Habicht 2017: 26. For its later continuation, see n. 82.

[69] See Fraser 1972: 1.213–19; Hölbl 2001: 94–5. For priests see Clarysse and van der Veken 1983.

[70] Mørkholm 1991: 65 with pl. VI.96, from *c*.304 BC on. Alexander is portrayed holding a thunderbolt on the reverse; the obverse shows Ptolemy wearing the royal diadem. Alexander features on other early Ptolemaic coinage.

[71] Ath. *Deipn*. 5.202a; cf. Stewart 1993: 252–62.

[72] Theoc. *Id*. 17.15–27.

[73] Cf. Ath. *Deipn*. 14.620d, for Jason on the shrines of Alexander; Łukaszewicz 2014: 313, statues, 310, possible representations on paintings and lamps.

[74] On the name see Fraser 1972: 2.32–3, n. 79.

[75] Strabo 17.1.8; cf. Caneva 2016: 222–4, importance of Alexander for the Ptolemies.

the city called 'Alexander's place (*topos*)' in his novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* (5.1.3–4) as one of great beauty, another city almost, with two rows of intersecting columns, he could have been describing this complex. A 'place', however, is not the same as a tomb and this literary embellishment may simply underline the fact that Alexander was not forgotten in the city he founded.[76] Other suggestions have been made; none is free from question.[77]

Alexander was not, however, always treated with due respect. In the first century BC a Ptolemy, probably Ptolemy X Alexander, removed Alexander's gold coffin and presumably melted it down. When Strabo visited Alexandria in the 20s BC, Alexander lay in a case made of glass (or possibly alabaster).[78] This too is how Caesar will have viewed him when he arrived in Alexandria and made straight for Alexander's tomb. According to the Roman poet Lucan, not counted among the admirers of Alexander, Caesar ignored all the gold and grandeur of the temples and the rest of the city and 'full of eager haste descended into the vault dug out for tombs where lay the insane offspring of Philip of Pella'.[79] Lucan proceeds to catalogue the slaughter and devastation wrought by Alexander.

Octavian, in contrast, victorious at Actium in 31 BC against the forces of Antony and Cleopatra whom he chased to Alexandria, treated his visit to Alexander's tomb with veneration and awe. When asked if he wished to see the tombs of the Ptolemies, he responded that it was not dead men he came to see but a king. But when Alexander's sarcophagus was brought out Octavian reached out to touch the mummy's face mask and somewhat ignominiously broke off Alexander's nose. This might have caused a serious diplomatic problem, but since the queen had died and Octavian was now in charge the incident apparently passed without further comment. The Roman victor, soon to be emperor Augustus, placed a crown of gold on top and covered the sarcophagus with flowers in respect.[80] He also replaced the figure of a sphinx on his seal with Alexander's portrait.[81]

With the arrival of Roman rule, the physical presence of Alexander's remains in Alexandria continued to carry potency for the city itself. He was still celebrated as founder (*ktistēs*) of Alexandria in a community prayer from the north Fayyum settlement of Karanis in the early second

[76] Fraser 1972: 2.36, n. 85.

[77] See Łukaszewicz 2014: 310, for possible representations on paintings and lamps; cf. Fraser 1972: 2.18, n. 31, on late glass from Carthage.

[78] Strabo 17.1.8, the Ptolemy known as Kokkes or Pareisaktos. Sandys 1615: 112, names him 'Cybiosactes, the Cyrian' (i.e. Seleucus), who married the eldest daughter of Berenice.

[79] Lucan 10.14–22, cf. Erskine 2002: 177, 'one demented megalomaniac visiting another'.

[80] Suet. *Aug*. 18.1; Dio 51.16.5

[81] Plin. *HN* 37.10; Suet. *Aug*. 50.

century.[82] Now, however, it was the legend of Alexander and the record of his increasingly fabulous exploits worldwide which was coming to the fore. Suetonius records how the emperor Gaius, more commonly known as Caligula (AD 37–41), was in the habit of wearing triumphal military dress which included the breastplate of Alexander taken from his tomb.[83] Maybe – but this is more likely fantasy. Caligula is not otherwise known to have visited Egypt. Somewhat later, in the struggles for rule that followed the downfall of Commodus in AD 193, when C. Pescennius Niger was hailed as the new Alexander, Alexandria made the mistake of backing him against his successful rival L. Septimius Severus.[84] When, therefore, Septimius Severus visited Alexandria in AD 200, he closed down the tomb of Alexander so no one should view his body; at the same time he destroyed all books from religious shrines lest their secret knowledge be available in the future.[85] Alexander, it is clear, still counted as potentially powerful.

This closure of the tomb did not last. When Severus' son Caracalla came to Alexandria in AD 215, he visited the main temple, made his sacrifices and hurried off to visit the tomb of Alexander. There he draped his purple cloak over the coffin and in homage to his hero left him all the valuables he wore.[86] This is the last recorded visit to Alexander's actual tomb, though his body in Alexandria was still a point of reference for the Antiochene Libanius in the late fourth century.[87]

When, in the *Romance* (recension A), Alexander dreams of an encounter with the god Sarapis, he questions the god concerning the time and nature of his death. In response the god foretells the success of his city and the cult of its founder, even during his lifetime. The prophecy ends: 'You shall inhabit her (the city) forever, both on death and (still) not dying; as a tomb you shall have the city which you are building.'[88] This proved a powerful

[82] *P. Mich.* XXI 827.35–6 (AD 120–4), with Alexander following the Greek Olympian gods and Augustus (see Claytor and Verhoogt 2018, for *P. Mich.* XXI). For the cult see n. 68.

[83] Suet. *Calig.* 52. [84] Dio 75.6.2a.

[85] Dio 76.13.2. This has sometimes been taken to mean that the books were closed up together with Alexander (e.g. Clarke 1805: 58; and later tales of a tomb full of texts), but collecting up the texts and closing down the tomb are not connected in Dio.

[86] Herodian 4.8.9; cf. Dio 78.7.3, Caracalla's extreme hostility towards Aristotelian philosophers in Alexandria because of Aristotle's alleged involvement in Alexander's death.

[87] Lib. *Or.* 49.12, so calling into question the view of Fraser 1972: 1.16, that riots under Aurelian (Amm. Marc. 22.16.15), in which the area of the royal palaces (the Brucheion district) was destroyed, were probably responsible for the tomb's destruction. For the location forgotten just shortly later see John Chrysostom, *Homily 26 on Corinthians II* 10.5, in Migne 1862: 581; Theodoret, *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* 8.61, with Erskine 2002: 179.

[88] *Romance* 1.33.11. See further Jouanno 2002: 77–9; Caneva 2016: 199–216, on Alexander's body and the *Romance*.

prophecy and the tomb of Alexander, both dead and forever alive (Greek: *kai thanōn kai ou thanōn*), has continued to hold its mystique for more than two millennia. The glamour and renown of the hero have meant that the search for his tomb – an ultimately fruitless goal – has continued undiminished.[89] A consideration of some of the main contenders for the identity of the tomb takes us deep into the problems of Alexandrian topography and archaeology, and yet further into the realms of human fantasy.

In the ninth-century chronicle of Ibn ^{c}Abd el-Ḥakim, a mosque of Dhū l-Qarnayn (the Two-Horned One – i.e. Alexander) is recorded as one of five in the city, lying near the city gate; no explanation is given for its name.[90] In the tenth century the historian-geographer al-Mas^{c}ūdī described the tomb (*qabr al-Iskandar*) erected by Alexander's mother Olympias, claiming that this was on view in the city of his own day (AD 943). Olympias, fearing the greed of successors, spurned gold in favour of marble for the sarcophagus, which was mounted on a base of stone with blocks of white and other coloured marble.[91] In Arab sources the Alexander legend was in full force.

The need somehow to connect with the world conqueror through the discovery of his tomb has not diminished over the years. Travellers, scholars and others have from time to time championed a range of possible locations. In a period of twenty-five years at the end of the twentieth century more than fifteen possible 'discoveries' were reported to the Egyptian authorities and, trumped only by those on Cleopatra VII, books on the subject continue to appear.[92] Despite many claims to the contrary Alexander's tomb has not been – and probably never will be – located. Here we consider just some of the more popular suggestions.

In the early sixteenth century the Granada-born Moor known as Leo Africanus recorded a visit to Alexandria. There, in the midst of the city's ruins, he described a small house, built like a little chapel, that contained a tomb which was highly respected by locals as that of Alexander the Great,

[89] Fraser 1972: 2.36–40, n. 86, with full sources and balanced discussion remains the most detailed if somewhat dry account; Empereur 1998a: 144–53; Chugg 2002 and 2004; Saunders 2006; Stoneman 2008: 196–8; Łukaszewicz 2014; Matthey 2014.

[90] Fraser 1972: 2.36–7, n. 86, §1, 'situated near the Gate of the City and its exit'; cf. Matthey 2014: 322–3, on implications of the mosque's alternative name of al-Khiḍr. Empereur 1998b: 68 records an amusing story from the same period involving Alexander's treasure, reputedly buried below the Pharos.

[91] Mas^{c}ūdī 1965: 254–5, §676 and §679. Around the same time, the Melkite patriarch Eutychius, *Annals* 27, records the involvement of Olympias. Cf. Mas^{c}ūdī §676.

[92] Empereur 1998a: 146–8; Chugg 2004; Saunders 2006.

high prophet and king, whom they knew from the Qur'an. Many foreigners, he wrote, come from distant parts to visit and venerate the tomb.[93] No further details are provided – no mention of a mosque that might link this site to that of Dhū l-Qarnayn or other local landmarks, or any details of the actual tomb.[94] Leo's initial description was, however, taken up by subsequent visitors, often in much the same words.[95] George Sandys, who visited Alexandria in 1611, while adding details from Strabo and Lucan, picked up on Leo: 'There is yet here to be seene a little Chapell; within a tomb' for Alexander, great prophet (no mention of king).[96] More than a century later, when Richard Pococke visited Alexandria and provided a more detailed description of the city, he recognised the tradition of veneration for Alexander but distanced himself from any location for his tomb.[97]

At this stage a new candidate takes over from Leo's small chapel, but the record is far from straightforward and at first unconnected to Alexander. The later accretion of connections is, however, typical of the development of the Alexander legend. First comes mention of a special sarcophagus, described but not seen by van Egmont and Heyman as a closely guarded chest in a large edifice.[98] Later visitors describe this as an ancient sarcophagus covered in hieroglyphs that had been turned into a cistern or reservoir for use by Muslim worshippers.[99] The French naturalist Sonnini de Manoncourt, who visited Alexandria more than once in the years that preceded Napoleon's invasion of 1798, perspicaciously recorded that if just those hieroglyphs could be deciphered the identity of the sarcophagus' original owner would be known.[100] At this stage the story takes a new turn.

On Napoleon's successful capture of Egypt, the sarcophagus-cistern was removed from its home in what was now specified as the Attarine mosque (built on the site of St Athanasius' church) by the French expeditionary

[93] Leo Africanus 1896: 3.864–5; Clarke 1805; Fraser 1972: 2.37, n. 86, §1, with the (earlier) Italian version; Chugg 2002: 21.

[94] As noted by Chugg 2002: 21–3 with figures 8–9, the map of Alexandria of Braun and Hogenberg (*c*.1573) labels a sizeable complex with spires and cupolas in the centre of the city as 'domus Alexandri Magni'. The relevance of this to any tomb remains unclear. Where else would one expect to find a building called Alexander's home?

[95] So Marmol in 1599, quoted in Fraser 1972: 2.37.

[96] Sandys 1615: 112.

[97] Pococke 1743: 4, 'so there have been travellers who relate that they pretended to have his body in some mosque'; the mosque concerned is unspecified, cf. p. 7, recording those of 1,001 pillars (once a church of St Mark?) and of St Athanasius.

[98] Van Egmont and Heyman 1769: 2. 133–4, noting the elaborate structure from which they were debarred after visiting a tower in the city walls. The identity of this complex was unclear: Jews claimed it as originally built by Nicanor, others as once the church of St Athanasius.

[99] Browne 1799: 6, 'in the great mosque . . . used for a cistern'; Sonnini de Manoncourt 1800: 122, 'a sort of pool or reservoir'.

[100] Sonnini de Manoncourt 1800: 122–3.

force. When the French capitulated, the British eventually recovered this huge sarcophagus together with the Rosetta Stone from the hold of a hospital ship in Alexandria's harbour where it had been hidden. Edward Daniel Clarke was the man entrusted with this mission and he was convinced, on the basis of information from merchants and others whom he questioned, that this was the sarcophagus of Alexander – he identified it as such in his study of 1805.[101] The sarcophagus found a new home in the British Museum where, after Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphics, it was recognised as that of Nectanebo II. For a time all went quiet on the subject of Alexander's tomb, but more recently Nectanebo's sarcophagus has been reclaimed for Alexander. It was, we are told, reused for his first burial in Memphis by Ptolemy son of Lagos in connection with Alexander's fake Egyptian paternity.[102] Whereas this hypothesis would explain how such a sarcophagus ever reached Alexandria, the well-known practice of Ptolemaic 'collectionism' – that is, the import to Alexandria of Egyptian antiquities from elsewhere in the country to adorn the new capital city– seems far more likely.[103]

The search for Alexander's tomb has inevitably continued. Two locations in particular have been championed: the Nabi Daniel mosque and the Alabaster Tomb in the old Italian cemetery to the east. The former was first identified by Ambroise Schilizzi, a Greek-born dragoman working for the Russian consulate in the mid nineteenth century, who claimed to have seen in its basement a mummified body encased in a crystal sarcophagus with papyri scattered around.[104] This was the image of Alexander in Youssef Chahine's 1990 Arabic film *Alexandria Again and Forever*. Found still alive in his Soma, Alexander only finally perished when his glass casket was drilled open.[105] The Nabi Daniel mosque location was first published by Mahmoud-Bey el-Falaki; this was endorsed but later rejected by Evaristo Breccia, the director of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. When, however, the basement of this mosque was finally inspected by the archaeologist Jean-Yves Empereur he found a rotunda with granite columns that may once have belonged to a late Roman cistern or colonnade. This particular candidate for the tomb is based on a series of false identities,

101 Clarke 1805, dedicated to Lord Hutchinson, late commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in Egypt; Saunders 2006: 145–6.

102 Wace 1948; Fraser 1972: 2.39–41, n. 86, §2; Chugg 2002; 2004: 174–86.

103 See Empereur 1998a: 117–18; Saunders 2006: 196–8.

104 Fraser 1972: 2.40–1, n. 87; Chugg 2004: 188; Saunders 2006: 148–55; Stoneman 2008: 199.

105 Halim 2002a. The film also features the waiter Stelios Coumoutsos, who spent his life and earnings in the vain search for Alexander's tomb. See Empereur 1998a: 148; Saunders 2006: 172–4.

starting with that of Daniel, and misleading stories, none of which bears close scrutiny.[106]

The third-century BC alabaster tomb in the Terra Santa cemetery, excavated by Breccia and suggested as a possible tomb by Achille Adriani, who succeeded him as the director of the Alexandria Museum, is at least a suitable tomb candidate in terms of date. Excavations in the area, however, have yielded no further remains.[107] And so the search goes on and new locations for the tomb continue to emerge.[108] The legend of Alexander, based as it is on human imagination and a fascination with greatness, is often misguided but nevertheless prevails. So over the millennia the Alexander of the *Romance*, 'king of Alexandria', has probably enjoyed more prominence than has the city's historical founder.[109]

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106 Mahmoud-Bey 1872: 51–2, already commenting on the ignorance of the Alexandrians; Fraser 1972: 2.36–41, nn. 85, 86, §1, 87–8; Empereur 1998a: 148–52; Chugg 2004: 187–93; Saunders 2006: 148–55. The current mosque dates only from the nineteenth century.

107 Adriani 2000: 61–9; Empereur 1998a: 150–3; Chugg 2004: 234–6; Saunders 2006: 163–72.

108 For example Chugg 2004: 274–5, suggests the surviving fragments of the Ptolemaic wall in the Shallalat Gardens were part of the Soma enclosure. His added suggestion that the body of Alexander was misidentified as that of St Mark stretches the imagination.

109 Budge 1896: 39, translating the Ethiopic version of the *Romance*.

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3 The Image of Alexander in Ancient Art

OLGA PALAGIA

The iconography of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) in ancient art evolved as his legend grew and he came to symbolise different things to diverse social groups through the centuries. None of his lifetime portraits has survived but we have literary records and Roman copies. In the Hellenistic period (323–30 BC) his image provided a source of legitimacy for his Successors, who placed his portrait on their coins, erected his posthumous statues in their kingdoms and generally sought to imitate him. These coin portraits and several Hellenistic statues have come down to us, enabling us to assess his image through the filter of later interpretations.

With the Romans' conquest of Macedonia and Greece, many portraits of Alexander were removed to Rome from 146 BC onwards, where they were not always treated with respect. Copies of earlier Alexander images were produced from the second century BC to the second century AD, until the Severan dynasty reintroduced the idea of Alexander as the paradigm of the ruler, thus generating a new crop of original coin and statuary portraits distributed across the Roman Empire in the third century AD. In the fourth and fifth centuries AD Alexander became one of the last symbols of paganism. The present survey offers a selection of Alexander images from the fourth century BC to the fifth century AD.

338–323 BC

The earliest portraits of Alexander were created when he was still crown prince, after Philip II's victory against Athens and Thebes at Chaeronia in 338 BC. They were all Attic works. The defeated Athenians dedicated bronze portraits of Philip and Alexander in the Agora.[1] These are probably identical with Philip's and Alexander's portraits riding a chariot, which Pliny mentions as having been commissioned by the Athenians from their state artist, Euphranor.[2] Chariot groups were normally dedicated in

[1] Paus. 1.9.4. [2] Plin. *NH* 34.78. Palagia 2015, 9.

Panhellenic sanctuaries to commemorate victories in chariot races, but there was a precedent in Athens for chariots as symbols of military victory: the Athenians dedicated a bronze chariot on the Acropolis in memory of their victories against the Boeotians and the Chalcidians, who had threatened the newly established Athenian democracy in 506 BC.[3]

In the aftermath of his victory at Chaeronia, Philip II went to Olympia and commissioned a round building, the Philippeum, to house the dynastic portraits of himself, his father Amyntas III, his son and heir Alexander, his wife Olympias and Eurydice, who was either his mother or his last wife: her identity is disputed.[4] The statues were created by the Athenian sculptor Leochares. Pausanias (5.20.10) says they were made of ivory and gold, but their extant bases indicate they were marble.[5] They were not meant as cult statues and the structure is best understood as a glorified family monument, Philip's testimony to the past and future of his dynasty. His intentions are obvious by the fact that he left out of the monument his brothers who reigned before him, his other wives and his other children.

All these portraits are now lost, but Alexander's image at age eighteen may be reflected in a private monument, an Attic grave relief commemorating an Athenian who died at the battle of Chaeronia.[6] The Athenian's opponent is shown as a young horseman with long hair, no doubt Alexander, who had participated in the battle.[7]

After he ascended the throne of Macedon at age twenty in 336 BC, Alexander deliberately cultivated his youthful image by shaving his chin and keeping his hair long. His hair was swept up from his forehead to form an *anastole* imitating a lion's mane, and he was said to have a melting gaze, looking up at the heavens.[8]

Few lifetime portraits of Alexander have come down to us. They all represent Alexander as more than human, no doubt under the influence of the Oriental image of the ruler. It all began in Egypt, which he conquered in 332, and he was hailed as the son of Ammon according to Egyptian practice.[9] We have a number of Egyptian images of Alexander wearing the horns of Ammon, accompanied by his official titulature in

[3] Hdt. 5.77; Paus. 1.28.2; *IG* I[3] 501. Hurwit 1999, 129, fig. 24.

[4] Paus. 5.17.4 and 20.10. Pausanias' text is corrupt, which increases the uncertainty. On the issue see Palagia 2010 (with earlier references).

[5] Schultz 2007. [6] Piraeus Museum 5280. Papastavrou 1988; Palagia 2015, 10, fig. 14.

[7] Plut. *Alex*. 9.2.

[8] On the physical appearance of Alexander see Plut. *Mor*. 180B and 335A–B; *Alex*. 4.1–7; Athen. 13.565a; Ael. *VH* 12.14. On his youthful image see Stewart 2003, 33–4; Troncoso 2010; Palagia 2018, 140.

[9] Hölbl 2001, 9–12.

hieroglyphics, in the Egyptian shrines he built or restored, the shrine of the boat at the temple of Ammon-Ra in Luxor and the temple of Ammon-Ra and Horus known as Qasr el-Megisba in the Oasis Bahariya.[10] Even though Alexander was never formally crowned pharaoh, the Egyptian priesthood conferred on him the official titles that ensured his legitimation. The Egyptian images of Alexander, however, are too stylised to be treated as documents of his actual appearance.

We learn more about Alexander's appearance towards the end of his life from the silver Porus decadrachms, possibly minted by Alexander himself to commemorate his victory over the Indian Porus at the Hydaspes River in 326.[11] The coins were inexpertly struck by a mobile mint somewhere in Central Asia. Alexander is shown standing on the reverse, crowned by Victory, wearing full armour and a plumed helmet, holding a sceptre in his left hand and the thunderbolt of Zeus in the right. Alexander's semi-divine appearance recalls not only his images in Egyptian sacred iconography, but also the portrait he commissioned from the painter Apelles, depicting him with Zeus' thunderbolt.[12] Long strands of hair fall over his chest, suggesting that after 326 Alexander let his hair grow.

When Alexander came into his own, he dispensed with Athenian artists and was said to have appointed as court artists the Sicyonian sculptor Lysippus, the Ephesian painter Apelles and the gem-cutter Pyrgoteles, granting only them licence to make his portrait.[13] Apelles had already been employed by Philip II as a portrait painter;[14] he painted Alexander for the extravagant fee of twenty talents, representing him with the thunderbolt of Zeus, suggesting he was on his way to deification.[15] His assumption of divine attributes paved the way for ruler portraits assimilated to gods in the Hellenistic period. Alexander dedicated this portrait in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, which already housed a statue of his father Philip, erected by the Ephesians in recognition of his successful efforts to expel the Persian garrison.[16] Apelles' portrait of Alexander with the thunderbolt became legendary in antiquity. Equal in fame was Lysippus' bronze statue of Alexander with a lance, which was said to reproduce the conqueror's liquid gaze

[10] Stewart 1993, 174–8, figs. 53–4; Hölbl 2001, 77–81, 85; Stewart 2003, 41, fig. 3.5; Winter 2005; Lorber 2011, 294–8.

[11] Holt 2003; Dahmen 2007, 6–9, 109–10, pls. 21–2; Palagia 2012, 371–3, figs 3–4.

[12] See n. 15.

[13] Plin. *NH* 7.125; Plut. *Alex*. 4.1–3. Further sources: Stewart 1993, 360–2.

[14] Plin. *NH* 35.93.

[15] Plin. *NH* 35.92; Plut. *Alex*. 4.1 See also Stewart 1993, 191–9 and 363–4 with further sources. For a possible Roman copy of this painting see n. 74.

[16] Arr. 1.17.11. Badian 1996, 13.

along with his leonine character.[17] Its original location is unknown. It is generally thought that the statuary type of Alexander with the lance is reflected in a series of bronze statuettes showing him in heroic nudity with long hair, one arm raised holding a spear, the other lowered, perhaps with a sword.[18] The earliest example comes from Upper Egypt, dating from the end of the fourth century BC (Figure 3.1).[19] A hole at the top of his head probably held an *atef* crown, as attested by the appearance of this statuary type wearing the Egyptian crown in the background of a Fayum *tondo* from Antinoopolis in the Cairo Museum.[20] The Egyptian provenance of the Fouquet Alexander may indicate that either the original portrait or a version of it was set up in Alexandria, a city Alexander founded in 331 BC.[21] Comparison of the style, stance and proportions of the bronze statuette with the marble portrait of Agias attributed to Lysippus reinforces its identification with Lysippus' Alexander with the lance.[22] The pose was repeated in other portraits of Hellenistic rulers, the nude *Terme Ruler* of the second century BC being the most obvious example.[23]

The Azara herm (Figure 3.2) probably reflects the head of the Lysippan prototype.[24] It is heavily weathered with nose and lips restored, but the *anastole* and long hair are typical; as it is the only inscribed portrait of Alexander, it provides a blueprint for Alexander's appearance. Lysippus' Alexander with the lance is usually dated around 330 BC, but Lysippus had produced earlier portraits of Alexander, notably his equestrian portrait among statues of his fallen Companions from the battle of Granicus in 334 that Alexander dedicated in the sanctuary of Zeus at Dium.[25] This famous bronze group was taken as a trophy to Rome by Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus in 146 BC and dedicated in his new Porticus Metelli.

17 Plut. *Mor.* 335A–B; 360D; *Alex.* 4.1. See also Stewart 1993, 393–6, with further sources.

18 Stewart 1993, 425, figs. 32, 35; Stewart 2003, 36; Stirpe 2006, 134–5; Palagia 2015, 3–4, figs. 3–4.

19 Fouquet Alexander. Paris, Louvre Br 370. Yalouris, Andronikos, Rhomiopoulou et al. 1980, 120, no. 41; Stewart 1993, 425, fig. 32; Beck, Bol and Bückling 2005, 552–3, no. 118; Descamps-Lequime 2011, 644–5, no. 410; Picón and Hemingway 2016, 100–1, no. 11.

20 Second century AD. Bergmann 1998, 67, pl. 15,4.

21 Descamps-Lequime 2011, 646.

22 Delphi Museum 1875. Moreno 1995, 82, 4.11.1.

23 Stewart 2003, 36. *Terme Ruler*: Rome, Palazzo Massimo 1049. Queyrel 2016, 160, fig. 135a–b.

24 Paris, Louvre Ma 546. Second century AD from Tivoli. Inscribed ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ ΜΑΚΕΔΩΝ. Stewart 1993, 423, figs. 45–6; Reinsberg 2005, 217–18, figs. 3.1 and 3.3; Descamps-Lequime 2011, 646, no. 411.

25 Plin. *NH* 34.64; Plut. *Alex.* 16.15–17; Arr. 1.16.4–5. Stewart 1993, 123–30 and 388–90 with further sources.



Figure 3.1 Bronze statuette of Alexander from Upper Egypt, 4th century BC. Photo: Hans R. Goette

Hellenistic Period (323–30 BC)

After Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 BC, his empire was temporarily held together in the names of his heirs, his half-witted half-brother Philip III Arrhidaeus and his infant son Alexander IV.[26] Philip III was murdered in 317 and Alexander IV in 310, whereupon the empire was carved up into

[26] Green 1990, 1–28.



Figure 3.2 Roman portrait of Alexander of Lysippan type. (Azara herm). Photo: Hans R. Goette

individual kingdoms ruled by Alexander's former Companions. Each one of the Successors strove to imitate Alexander physically or sartorially and so far as we know, they all shaved their beards and adopted the youthful heroic image of the conqueror.[27] The association with him provided legitimacy for their power and they claimed him as paradigm or founder hero, placing his portrait on their coins and commissioning artworks where they fought or hunted alongside the conqueror during the campaign for the conquest of the Persian Empire. In addition, scores of original portrait statues of Alexander were set up in the lands he conquered.[28] His image became the prototype of ruler portraiture for the Successors, but the

[27] Smith 1988, 68. Arr. *Succ.* F 12 and F 19.

[28] For the image of Alexander in Hellenistic art, see Palagia 2018.

situation was reversed after the survivors of the Asian campaign died out: after about 280 BC depictions of Alexander begin to conform to the iconography of local ruling houses like the Ptolemies of Egypt or the Attalids of Pergamon. With the passage of time his features were increasingly idealised and rejuvenated.

Shortly after Alexander's death and during the Companions' struggles for the succession, Craterus marked his bid in 321 with the commission of a colossal bronze group of a lion hunt in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi.[29] This group is now lost; it was made by Lysippus, Alexander's favourite sculptor, and Leochares, who had fashioned Alexander's portrait for the Philippeum, and depicted Craterus coming to Alexander's rescue during a lion hunt in one of the game parks of ancient Syria (which comprised modern Lebanon). It represented Alexander and Craterus hunting a lion on foot, assisted by dogs.[30] Craterus fell victim to the fight for the succession: the dedicatory inscription states that the monument was set up after Craterus' death by his homonymous son. However, it could hardly date beyond 316 BC, which marks the lower limit of Lysippus' career.[31]

Another lion hunt conducted by two Macedonians on foot is represented on a floor mosaic in a palatial mansion in Pella, the capital of the Macedonians, dating from the late fourth century BC.[32] The two hunters are shown as equals in heroic nudity and there is no attempt at portraiture. The hunter on the left, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, is usually taken for Alexander, while the hunter on the right, trying to attract the lion's attention, is often identified with Craterus or Hephaestion. Whoever he may be, it is reasonable to suppose the mansion belonged to one of Alexander's Companions who wished to commemorate his participation in a royal hunt.

Alexander's lion hunts also became a funerary motif as attested by the painted hunting frieze on the facade of Tomb II in Vergina and by the so-called Alexander sarcophagus from Sidon. They both represent mounted hunts conducted according to the Persian custom.[33] The Alexander sarcophagus, excavated in the royal cemetery of Sidon, is named after

[29] Plin. *NH* 34.64; Plut. *Alex*. 40.5. Dedicatory inscription *in situ*: Jacquemin, Moulliez and Rougemont 2012, no. 63. For the group see Palagia 2000, 184–5; Stewart 2003, 45; Borza and Palagia 2007, 97–8.

[30] Alexander hunting lions on foot in Persian game parks: Curt. 8.1.18.

[31] Lysippus' last recorded activity is the design of an amphora for Cassandreia, founded by Cassander in 316: Athen. 11.784c.

[32] Pella Museum. From the House of Dionysus. Palagia 2000, 185–6, fig. 8; Descamps-Lequime 2011, 46–7, no. 1.

[33] According to Arr. 4.13.1 Alexander also rode to the hunt in the Persian manner.

Alexander because he is represented on the long sides, fighting the battle of Issus on one side and hunting a lion on the other.[34] It is attributed to Abdalonymus, appointed king of Sidon by Alexander in 332 BC. The date of his death is unknown, but he probably outlived Alexander by at least a decade. On the sarcophagus he is depicted in Persian costume hunting a lion on horseback while Alexander rides to his rescue, probably assisted by Hephaestion. We do not know if this scene is a record of a historical lion hunt or a formulaic royal hunt with the addition of Alexander who appears as Abdalonymus' supporter.

More enigmatic is the lion hunt in the painted frieze on the facade of Tomb II in Vergina, easily the most controversial monument in Macedonian archaeology. Alexander as a mounted hunter appears in isolation at the centre of the frieze, which depicts a multi-quarry hunt with some hunters on foot and others on horseback hunting deer, a boar, a lion and bears, perhaps in isolated episodes that take place in different geographical regions.[35] Alexander aims his spear at a lion which is about to be struck down by another hunter. The other figures are too idealised to allow recognition, but there is no doubt that we have here a historical not a mythological hunt.[36] The tomb dates roughly from 336 to 316 BC, but its date cannot be narrowed down more precisely. The excavator, M. Andronikos, identified it as a royal tomb on account of its rich burial goods. He pointed out that only two kings were buried in Macedonia in that period, Philip II and his son Philip III Arrhidaeus, and attributed it to Philip II because he was by far the more significant historical figure.[37] Both Philip II and Philip III were murdered in their forties along with their young wives, and the tomb indeed houses the remains of such a couple. The fact that the wife was accompanied with an array of weapons appropriate to a warrior sparked a controversy that rages to this day, for Philip III's wife Adea Eurydice had military training. The fact that the woman was buried with a gold and ivory couch showing a battle of Greeks and Persians, along with the lion hunt on the facade and the man's shield with the device of Achilles and Penthesilea emphasising Alexander's affinity to Achilles,[38] points to a period after Alexander's conquest of Asia, thus reinforcing the attribution of Tomb II to Philip III

[34] Istanbul Archaeological Museum 370. Stewart 1993, 299–301, 422–3, figs. 101–3, 105–6; Palagia 2000, 186–9, figs. 10–11; Palagia 2017a, 181–2; Palagia 2018, 147–9 (with further references).

[35] Borza and Palagia 2007, 90–103, col. pls. 4–7; Palagia 2018, 151–3 (with earlier references).

[36] This is the general view with the notable exception of Franks 2012, but see the review in Palagia 2014a.

[37] Andronicos 1984, 220–35.

[38] On Alexander and Achilles see n. 94. On a shield with Achilles and Penthesilea belonging to Alexander see Figure 3.7 and n. 97.

Arrhidaeus.[39] However, forensic examinations of the woman's bones seem to disagree on her age, which ranges from a little under twenty to a little over thirty, and as both queens had to be rather on the young side, the identification of Tomb II as a royal tomb remains *sub judice*.[40]

The coinage of the Successors introduced Alexander's head on the obverse, inspired by the head of Heracles on Alexander's own coinage.[41] In this way the deified Alexander became the patron god of the new dynasties. Once the ruling houses became established, however, they replaced Alexander's head with the image of the reigning monarch. Ptolemy I of Egypt led the way. After he managed to hijack Alexander's body from the army of Perdiccas in Damascus in 321, he issued a new series of coins in 320/19 featuring Alexander in elephant scalp as a token of his conquest of India, also wearing Ammon's horn, which was aimed at the Egyptian population, signifying the pharaoh's assimilation to Ammon-Ra.[42] Around 312 Alexander's image was refined with the addition of the *mitra*, symbol of Dionysus, and Zeus' aegis attached to the lower part of the elephant scalp; this new issue is thought to commemorate the move of Ptolemy's capital from Memphis to Alexandria.[43] By far the most spectacular Alexander coin minted by Ptolemy I is a gold issue from the end of the fourth century with Alexander on the reverse, riding a *quadriga* driven by elephants and holding a sceptre and the thunderbolt of Zeus.[44] The obverse carries Ptolemy's portrait which will henceforth replace Alexander's head.

Ptolemy's invention of the image of Alexander wearing an elephant scalp left a brief impact on the coins of Seleucus I, who imitated this obverse around 300 BC after his (failed) attempt to follow in Alexander's footsteps in India and his acquisition of 500 elephants from the Mauryan king Chandragupta.[45] But it was Lysimachus in the early third century who produced the finest and longest-lasting coin type of Alexander (Figure 3.3), based on Ptolemy's image of the conqueror with Ammon's horn.[46] Alexander wears the royal diadem; Ammon's horn is a token of deification and does not refer to Egypt in this case. The conqueror's powerful and

[39] For this attribution see Borza and Palagia 2007 (with earlier references). Contra Lane Fox 2011 (with earlier references).

[40] The issue is discussed at length in Palagia 2017b, 157–60.

[41] Mørkholm 1991, 43, pl. III, 40–3.

[42] Hölbl 2001, 93; Dahmen 2007, 19–11, 112–13, pl. 4; Lorber 2012, 212, fig. 12.3. See also nn. 9 and 10.

[43] Dahmen 2007, 11, 113, pl. 4; Lorber 2011, 298–304, fig. 3; Lorber 2012, 212, fig. 12.3.

[44] Dahmen 2007, pl. 4.6–8; Sheedy 2007, 114–15, no. 47; Lorber 2011, 310–12, fig. 4; Lorber 2012, 213, fig. 12.4.

[45] Stewart 1993, 313–15; Dahmen 2007, 117–18, pl. 7.

[46] Dahmen 2007, 119, pl. 8; Sheedy 2007, 137–49, nos. 63–74; Palagia 2012, 377, fig. 12.



Figure 3.3 Tetradrachm of Lysimachus. Photo: New York, American Numismatic Society

dynamic image was meant to boost the ambitions of Lysimachus, who never introduced his own portrait on his coins and as a result his likeness is lost to us.

Lysimachus' coins with Alexander circulated into the second century BC, which witnessed a final attempt by the Hellenistic monarchs to enlist Alexander's coin image in support of their dynastic claims. Agathocles of Bactria (*c.*190–170 BC) minted coins with Alexander's portrait wearing a lion scalp in imitation of the obverse of Alexander's original coins with Heracles' head.[47]

The Hellenistic period proved fertile ground for the proliferation of Alexander's sculptural portraits, created not only in the Successor kingdoms but also in the Greek cities and Panhellenic sanctuaries. The sanctuary of Zeus in Olympia in particular was the location of a group of portraits dedicated by the Eleians probably towards the end of the fourth century. Pausanias (6.11.1) saw the statues of Philip II, Alexander, Seleucus I and Antigonus One-Eye. He specifies that all the statues were on horseback except for Antigonus, which has triggered speculation whether his statue was a later addition.[48] A marble head of Alexander found at Volantza near Olympia may belong to another portrait of the conqueror dedicated in the

[47] Dahmen 2007, 120–1, pl. 9. [48] Stewart 1993, 279–80.

sanctuary of Zeus in the second century BC, as indicated by its stylistic affinity to the Great Altar of Pergamon.[49]

Several statues of Alexander were erected in the city of Alexandria, where he enjoyed two cults, one as founder and another associated with the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies.[50] Ptolemy I set up an equestrian portrait of Alexander as founder in the city; no visual record of this work survives.[51] Alexander's cult statue connected to the Ptolemaic ruler cult probably depicted him as Zeus, wearing an aegis in the shape of a Macedonian *chlamys* and holding a sceptre (*Alexander Aigiochos*). This statuary type is dated to the reign of Ptolemy I and transmitted through a number of small-scale copies in bronze or stone of the Hellenistic period, all excavated in Egypt.[52] An original head of Alexander in marble, once inserted into a statue found in Alexandria, was created in the second century BC under one of the later Ptolemies.[53] It is fashioned according to the aesthetics of royal Ptolemaic portraiture, presenting a rejuvenated and visionary Alexander. A marble head of Alexander as an idealised youth, found in Thmuis/Tell Timai,[54] formed part of an assemblage of under-life-size acrolithic cult statues of Arsinoe II, Ptolemy III, Berenice II, Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III along with images of Isis, Aphrodite and Dionysus.[55] The group dates from the reign of Ptolemy V as it includes his mother Arsinoe III, who was deified posthumously. It was intended for private worship and reflects the cult of the royal house after Ptolemy IV reformed it.[56] It provides a rare glimpse at the function of Alexander's image as the focus of the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies.

Alexander in the Attalid kingdom was represented in a variety of ways during the second century BC. A colossal head from Pergamon is a Hellenistic variant of the tortured image of the exhausted conqueror invented by Lysippus,[57] while a statue from Magnesia on Sipylus depicts

[49] Olympia, Museum of the History of the Olympic Games Λ 245. Stewart 1993, 332 and 430, fig. 17; Palagia 2018, 157, fig. 6.7.

[50] Fraser 1972, 215–16; Hölbl 2001, 94; Palagia 2020b, 65–6.

[51] Ps.-Lib. *Progymnasmata* 27. Stewart 2003, 48.

[52] Stewart 1993, 421–2, fig. 83; Stewart 2003, 48; Reinsberg 2005, 226–7, fig. 3.7; Lorber 2011, 312–15; Palagia 2020b, 66, fig. 1.

[53] London, British Museum 1857. Stewart 1993, 424, fig. 124; Reinsberg 2005, 220, fig. 3.4; Palagia 2018, 154, fig. 6.5.

[54] Cairo Museum JE 39521. Lembke 2000, 115–18, figs. 3.1–3.4.

[55] Lembke 2000; Palagia 2020b, 69–70.

[56] Hölbl 2001, 169–70.

[57] Istanbul Archaeological Museum 1138. Stewart 1993, 332–3, 428, figs. 128–9; Reinsberg 2005, 219, fig. 3.2.

Alexander as a young god in a *himation*, holding a sword, reminiscent of the image of a deified Attalid ruler in the guise of Zeus.[58]

Among the last Hellenistic images of Alexander are two marble portraits of the second century BC from Delos. Both represent a rejuvenated and highly idealised conqueror with long, cascading hair tied with a royal diadem. An over-life-size head with long hair and upward gaze (Figure 3.4) was found near the temple of the Twelve Gods and probably belonged to one of a pair of cult statues standing on one of two bases at the back of the *cella*.[59] The two holes at the top of the head must have supported an attachment that need not be Pan's horns as is usually



Figure 3.4 Marble head of Alexander from Delos, 2nd century BC. Photo: Olga Palagia

[58] Istanbul Archaeological Museum 709. Stewart 1993, 427, fig. 133; Palagia 2018, 154–6, fig. 6. Attalid ruler as Zeus: Istanbul Archaeological Museum 2767 from Pergamon. Queyrel 2016, 150, figs. 123–4.

[59] Delos Museum A 4184. Marcadé 1996, 84, no. 32 (Queyrel); Queyrel 2016, 148–50, fig. 121. The third-century date Queyrel proposes appears too early for the style of the head.

suggested but could have been a metallic sun disc by analogy with a plastic vase of the second century depicting Alexander's head decorated with stars.[60] The second Alexander from Delos is a fragmentary bust wearing a *himation* and once composed of several pieces; its original context is unknown.[61]

A youthful and idealised head of Alexander found near the Erechtheum on the Athenian Acropolis probably also dates from the second century BC.[62] Its high quality originally prompted an association with Leochares and a date during Alexander's lifetime, but its striated hair locks do not appear before the mid second century BC and it has recently been interpreted as an Attalid dedication associated with the Attalid monuments erected on the Athenian Acropolis.[63] Two Roman copies of this head indicate its popularity in the Roman period.[64]

Roman Republic and Early Empire

The Roman conquest of the Greek world from 146 to 30 BC greatly diminished the need for new statues of Alexander, while artworks depicting the conqueror were gradually removed to Rome.[65] They were not always treated with respect. Julius Caesar replaced Alexander's head with his own in an equestrian portrait by Lysippus that he placed in his own Forum,[66] while Claudius had the head of Augustus painted over that of Alexander in a panel by Apelles showing Alexander riding a chariot, set up in the Forum of Augustus.[67] Augustus himself, after visiting Alexander's tomb in Alexandria while he was still Octavian in 330, adopted Alexander's image on his official seal but later replaced it with his own portrait.[68] Earlier on, in the period 90–70 BC, a flamboyant portrait of Alexander with cascading long hair and ram's horn appeared on the obverse of Macedonian tetradrachms minted by the *quaestor* Aesillas to finance the war against Mithridates VI of Pontus.[69]

60 Brussels, Musée de Cinquantenaire A 1938. Yalouris, Andronikos, Rhomiopoulou et al. 1980, 120–1, no. 42; Di Vita and Alfano 1995, 311, no. 107.

61 So-called Inopos. Paris, Louvre Ma 855. Marcadé 1996, 86, no. 33 (Queyrel); Hamiaux 1998, 67–9, no. 71; Queyrel 2016, 63, fig. 34.

62 Athens, Acropolis Museum 1331. Stewart 1993, 106–12, 421, col. pl. 1, fig. 5; Reinsberg 2005, 222–3, fig. 5; Palagia 2020a, 276–81, figs. 16.5 and 16.6.

63 Fittschen 1977, 22, Beil. 22; Stewart 2003, 35; Palagia 2020a, 276–81 (Attalid dedication).

64 Berlin, Antikenmuseum K 203 and Schloss Erbach 642. Fittschen 1977, 21–5, pl. 8 and Beil. 3.

65 Stewart 2003, 55–9; Stirpe 2006, 43–6.

66 Stat. *Silv*. I.1.84–7.

67 Plin. *NH* 35.93–4.

68 Suet. *Aug*. 50. Stewart 2003, 58.

69 Dahmen 2007, 122–3.

While Alexander was receding from public consciousness during the Roman Republic and the early Roman Empire, he became popular in private and domestic contexts as attested from a number of representations from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Boscoreale, all dating between the second century BC and the first century AD. There is also an isolated instance of a private dedication in the Panhellenic sanctuary of Olympia by one of the Roman colonists of Corinth shortly after 44 BC. Pausanias (5.25.1) remarks that he dedicated a statue of Alexander in the likeness of Zeus.

The Alexander mosaic, showing a cavalry battle between Macedonians and Persians, found in the House of the Faun in Pompeii and dating from the late second century BC, contains the earliest image of Alexander from the area.[70] It is a mosaic pavement reproducing a monumental painting of the late fourth century BC, employing the four-colour palette – a technique that went out of use in the Hellenistic period – and telescoping the action into a narrow frame.[71] The accurate observation of the clothing and equipment of both Persians and Macedonians indicates a composition created within the lifetime of the battle's survivors. It depicts the encounter between Alexander and Darius III on the battlefield of Issus in 333 BC. The episode is described in Diodorus (17.34.1–5): Alexander is prevented from capturing Darius by the intervention of Darius' brother and one of his nobles, who thrust himself into Alexander's path. Alexander's profile image with dishevelled straight hair, sideburns, aquiline nose and fierce eyes constitutes one of the most haunting portraits of the conqueror. The prototype of this painting has been variously attributed either to Philoxenus of Eretria, who painted a battle of Alexander and Darius for Cassander of Macedon, or Helena of Egypt, who was presumably commissioned by Ptolemy I. Her painting was later removed to Rome and dedicated by Vespasian in his temple of Peace.[72]

Alexander, again sporting sideburns and wearing a *kausia*, the Macedonian elite hat, with a royal diadem, a long-sleeved Persian *chiton* and a cloak and holding a spear, can be recognised in a mural from the villa of P. Fannius Synistor from Boscoreale, dating from the mid first century BC.[73] It has been suggested that this reflects a funerary painting from Macedonia, where Alexander was shown with one of his Companions

[70] Naples National Museum 10020. Stewart 1993, 130–50, col. pls. 4–5; Cohen 1997; Stirpe 2006, 150–7; Palagia 2017a, 179–81, figs. 11.1–3 (with earlier references).

[71] Cf. Plin. *NH* 35.50.

[72] Philoxenus: Plin. *NH* 35.110. Advocated by Stewart 1993, 147–50; Stewart 2003, 47. Helena: Phot. *Bibl.* 190, p. 149b29–33 Bekker. Advocated by Palagia 2017a, 180.

[73] Naples National Museum 906. Palagia 2014b, 211–14, figs. 1 and 2.

who had returned home from the Asian campaign and was eventually buried in Macedonia.

Two wall paintings from houses in Pompeii, dating from the first century AD, were probably inspired by famous paintings of Alexander created in his lifetime. A mural in the House of the Vettii depicts a youthful Zeus sitting on a throne, legs covered with a purple *himation*, wreathed with oak and holding a sceptre and thunderbolt.[74] His longish hair and upward gaze have prompted the association with Apelles' famous panel of Alexander holding a thunderbolt, dedicated in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus.[75] Another mural in Pompeii depicts the wedding of Alexander with Rhoxane, inspired by a famous panel by Aetion auctioned in Olympia during the games of 324.[76] In the mural Alexander is shown in heroic nudity with a spear and sword, gazing at the bride, who stands among pieces of his armour accompanied by a cupid. Alexander has a Persian attendant, which helps identify the theme of the painting. Aetion's panel included Hephaistion and more cupids playing with the conqueror's weapons, a reflection of the iconography of Venus and Mars. This painting was eventually removed to Rome, where it was seen by Lucian.

A bronze statuette of an equestrian Alexander in armour attacking a fallen enemy with his sword and dating from the first century AD comes from near the theatre at Herculaneum.[77] Another horse found alongside it indicates that it was part of a group.[78] Alexander wears the royal diadem, which he only assumed in 330. The statuette cannot therefore reflect the Granicus group, dedicated at Dium soon after 334.[79] It is now impossible to know whether it copies a work created in Alexander's lifetime.

A Roman variation of Alexander's image can be found in the bronze statuette of a standing Alexander from Pompeii.[80] He wears a *cuirass* decorated with a *quadriga* in silver inlay and an *aegis* over the left shoulder, signifying assimilation to Zeus. He holds a sword in his left hand and a spear in his right, his left foot placed on an elevation.

Versions of Alexander's image reached as far as Afghanistan in the first century AD. A gold clasp from a tomb in Tillya Tepe, manufactured in Central Asia, represents two warriors in mirror image, wearing Alexander's

[74] Stewart 1993, 198–9, fig. 65; Stirpe 2006, 171–3; Palagia 2015, 2–3, fig. 1. [75] See n. 15.

[76] Lucian *Her*. 4–7. Stewart 1993, 181–6, col. pls. 6-7a; Stirpe 2006, 168–70; Palagia 2015, 7–8, fig. 11.

[77] Naples National Museum 4996. Stewart 1993, 127, fig. 21; Stirpe 2006, 142–5; Picón and Hemingway 2016, 114–15, no. 15.

[78] Naples National Museum 3894. Stirpe 2006, 146–7. [79] For the Granicus group see n. 25.

[80] Naples National Museum 5014. Roberts 2013, 114–15, fig. 119.

armour as seen on the Alexander mosaic, a royal diadem and holding a shield with a Macedonian star.[81] The long hair falling on his shoulders is reminiscent of Alexander's long hair on the Porus decadrachms.[82]

Late Roman Empire

The third century AD witnessed a resurgence of interest in Alexander, initiated by the emperor Caracalla (AD 212–217), who visited Alexander's grave in Alexandria in AD 215, exchanged the conqueror's weapons for his own (Cass. Dio 78.7.1), erected statues of Alexander in Rome and across the empire and practised *imitatio Alexandri* in life as well as in art.[83] Alexander once again provided the inspiration for renewed struggles against the Parthians and served as a paradigm of the autocratic ruler. After Caracalla, the mantle of veneration of Alexander passed to further members of the Severan dynasty, Elagabalus (AD 218–222) and then Severus Alexander (AD 222–235), who erected his portrait among those of the deified emperors in his private chapel.[84] This practice trickled down to the public space, as witnessed in a colossal marble statue of Alexander wearing *chiton* and *chlamys* and standing in the *scenae frons* of the first half of the third century AD in the theatre at Perge, in the company of imperial portraits.[85] Alexander's highly romanticised face recalls another colossal image of high quality, allegedly from Asia Minor, reproducing the tortured look of the youthful and heroic world conqueror.[86] The lack of context of this bronze head once led to its association with a group of imperial portraits from Bubon, and even its authenticity was contested, but neither of these suggestions can be substantiated.[87] Alexander as paradigm of the intellectual ruler appears in an assemblage of marble medallion busts of famous Greek philosophers and their pupils found in an alleged

81 Kabul, National Museum 14.40.245. Palagia 2012, 374–6, fig. 9; Boardman 2015, pl. XXXII. Alexander mosaic: see n. 70.

82 Porus decadrachms: see n. 11.

83 *Hist. Aug.*, *Aurelius Antoninus* 2.1–2. Castritus 1988; Stewart 1993, 348, T 21; Stewart 2003, 61; Dahmen 2007, 34–5 and 142–3; Borza and Palagia 2007, 115. For Alexander's image in the late Roman period see Stewart 2003, 61–6.

84 *Hist. Aug.*, *Severus Alexander* 31.5. Rösger 1988; Stewart 2003, 61–2; Dahmen 2007, 37.

85 Antalya Museum. Di Vita and Alfano 1995, 207–8; Stewart 2003, 64; Öztürk 2009, Beil. 8.

86 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, on loan from a private collection. Berger 1971; Stewart 2003, 64, fig. 3.1; Queyrel 2003, 116, no. 2 (with further references).

87 Ian (1977/8, 274, pl. 79, 1–2) has demonstrated the lack of evidence for attributing it to the imperial assemblage from Bubon. Suspected forgery (on no grounds): Lehmann 2014, 200–1, no. 6.

philosophical school of the late fourth or early fifth century AD at Aphrodisias (Figure 3.5).[88] He is shown in military attire, upward gaze and *anastole*, a late Roman image harking back to Lysippan prototypes as transmitted through the Azara herm (Figure 3.2).

Two hoards of remarkable gold medallions, one from Tarsus in Cilicia and another from Aboukir, attributed to the reigns of Elagabalus or Severus Alexander, represent Alexander in various guises, his father Philip II, his mother Olympias and the emperor Caracalla.[89] Their mint is unknown, but they are connected with Macedonia and associated with the games in



Figure 3.5 Marble medallion bust of Alexander from Aphrodisias, 4th or early 5th century AD. Photo: Courtesy of New York University Excavations at Aphrodias (Guido Petruccioli)

[88] Aphrodisias Museum. Smith 1990, 135–8, pls. 8; 9,1–3; Stewart 2003, 64, fig. 18.

[89] The three Tarsus medallions are now in Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, while the twenty Aboukir medallions are distributed among Berlin, Lisbon, Boston and Thessaloniki. Dahmen 2007, 35–7; 144–2; Weisser and Dahmen 2009 (with earlier references).

honour of Alexander introduced in Beroea in the reign of Elagabalus.[90] Alexander's image reflects earlier prototypes. His appearance with the ram's horn of Ammon[91] was inspired by the coins of Lysimachus (Figure 3.3) minted half a millennium previously,[92] while his image with a lion scalp harks back to Alexander's own coinage with the head of Heracles, which was adapted as a portrait of Alexander in the provincial coinage of Macedonia in the period AD 218–249.[93]

Two Aboukir medallions showing Alexander with a shield can be taken as references to the legend of Alexander as the new Achilles.[94] One shows a bust of Alexander carrying a spear and the segment of a shield representing the zodiac (Figure 3.6).[95] A star-studded shield is an allusion to the shield of Achilles as described in the *Iliad* (484–9). Alexander's upward gaze, furrowed brow and sideburns recall Hellenistic re-elaborations of the Lysippan prototype, like the Pergamon Alexander.[96] Another medallion with the legend



Figure 3.6 Aboukir medallion depicting Alexander with spear and star-studded shield. Photo: Hans R. Goette

[90] Dahmen 2007, 136.
[91] Berlin, Münzkabinett 1903/873. Dahmen 2007, pl. 27.1; Weisser-Dahmen 2009, fig. 1.
[92] See n. 46. [93] Dahmen 2007, 136–8, 144–52.
[94] On Alexander and Achilles see Ameling 1988; Stewart 1993, 78–86; Borza and Palagia 2007, 115 with n. 186; Heckel 2015.
[95] Berlin, Münzkabinett 1907/230. Dahmen 2007, 151, pl. 27.5; Weisser and Dahmen 2009, fig. 3.
[96] See n. 57.

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ shows Alexander, seated with draped legs, receiving his armour from Victory in allusion to Achilles receiving his new armour from Thetis (Figure 3.7).[97] Oddly enough, the device of Achilles and Penthesilea on the shield presented to Alexander has a real-life parallel in the gold-and-ivory shield excavated in Tomb II at Vergina in Macedonia in 1977, which carries the same device in mirror image.[98] Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding the occupants of Vergina Tomb II, the recovery in a Macedonian tomb attributed to the Argeads of a shield associated with Alexander in the imagery of the third century AD prompts the question of diffusion of the shield blazon.[99] Did Alexander originally own such a shield, and was it copied by his Companions who imitated his style? Was the shield blazon transmitted through artworks that survived into the Roman period but left no trace for us? Or did Alexander's shield become known to the Romans because Caracalla removed it from his grave in Alexandria?[100] In any case, Alexander's shield appears again, this time held on Alexander's lap, on a bronze contorniate minted in Rome circa AD 400.[101] These contorniates



Figure 3.7 Aboukir medallion depicting Alexander receiving armour from Victory. Photo: Hans R. Goette

[97] Berlin, Münzkabinett 1908/3. Borza and Palagia 2007, 116–17, fig. 19; Dahmen 2007, pl. 27.7; Weisser and Dahmen 2009, fig. 5.

[98] Andronicos 1984, 134–5, figs. 91–3; Borza and Palagia 2007, 113–17, fig. 18.

[99] See n. 39.

[100] The issue is discussed in Borza and Palagia 2007, 115–17.

[101] Berlin, Münzkabinett 1912/306. Dahmen 2007, 152–3, fig. 28.1; Borza and Palagia 2007, 115, fig. 20a.

were exchanged as New Year's gifts among the pagan elite of Rome, with Alexander serving as a potent symbol of the old world.

Reflections of Alexander's image during the Severans reached as far as Gandhara: a Buddhist shrine at Hadda in modern Afghanistan includes a clay Vajrapani modelled on the features of Alexander.[102]

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[102] Tarzi 1976, 402–4; Boardman 1994, 141–3, fig. 4.89; Boardman 2015, 191–2, fig. 29.

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4 Alexander, Philosophy and Rome

A Trajanic Moment

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The three imperial writers who idealised Alexander to any significant extent – Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom and Arrian – all wrote and lived at least partly under Trajan's rule. It is thus greatly tempting to speak of a specifically Trajanic moment in Alexander reception, at least among Greeks. Trajan's own fabled *imitatio Alexandri* increases the temptation. To whatever extent (or with whatever degree of earnestness) Trajan imitated Alexander, the vigorous deployment of his image by authors living under Trajan's rule suggests their interest in the king was influenced in some way by the emperor's public association with him. This is most obvious in the case of Dio Chrysostom, whose four orations on good kingship (*Or.* 1–4) were addressed to Trajan ('you' throughout *Orations* 1 and 3)[1] and tacitly (but indisputably) used Alexander as a stand-in for the king.[2] It is not certain exactly when these orations were composed or delivered: as John Moles notes, it is easier to claim Trajan's *imitatio Alexandri* motivated Dio's use of Alexander if it predated Dio's composition of the orations.[3] In any case, it is clear Dio saw the Macedonian king as a useful figure through which to articulate a theory of kingship, with Trajan as its implied or real audience.[4] Moles has argued for the possible relevance of three of Dio's lost works: the *Encomium of Heracles* against Plato, perhaps written with Trajan's imitation of Heracles in mind; the eight-book *On the Virtues of Alexander*, which may have imitated Onesicritus' work on Alexander; and the history of the Getae, the first people conquered by Alexander, known to the Romans as the Dacians, against whom both Domitian and Trajan campaigned.[5] While it is more difficult to find explicit connections between Trajan and Alexander in Plutarch, scholars have argued convincingly for the latter's general Trajan

[1] For example 1.9, 1.36, 1.44, 1.49, 1.84, 3.1, 3.2–3, 3.15, 3.25, 3.27–8, 3.62, 3.73, 3.96–7.

[2] The essential discussion is Moles 1990.

[3] See Moles 1990: 299, for dating.

[4] Whether Dio read these directly to the emperor is up for debate. Swain 1996: 193–4, and Whitmarsh 2001: 324–6, think it unlikely, contra von Arnim 1898: 402–4, 412–14, and Moles 1983 and 1990.

[5] Moles (1990: 363) suggests this was a critique of Domitian's failed campaign produced under Trajan rather than a work about Trajan's campaigns.

consciousness,[6] and internal evidence from his corpus points to a Trajanic date for his main Alexander writings.[7] We can also reasonably guess that Arrian, who composed a now-lost seventeen-book *Parthian Histories* that dealt with Trajan's campaigns, saw a connection between the respective conquerors of the Achaemenid and Arsacid dynasties.[8]

The present chapter is part of a longer study on Alexander's relationship with philosophy in Roman imperial literature. Here I compare texts written in Greek, extending not too far before or after Trajan's reign, that are decidedly philosophical – those of Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Pseudo-Diogenes and Maximus of Tyre – with those of Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch that, unusually, make Alexander a philosopher or a potential philosopher. (Arrian also makes positive associations between Alexander and philosophy, but his importance lies in his presentation of Alexander in the *Anabasis* as the greatest war hero in history, and he is not dealt with extensively here.) Given Alexander's tutelage by Aristotle and the general philhellenism of the Argead family, as well as our writers' own philosophical leanings, we may not be surprised to see an intimate association of Alexander with philosophy, but this specific embellishment does not appear to be found in the Greco-Roman canon as we have it other than in Dio and Plutarch. Again, Dio is our guide, as his lessons in philosophical kingship are clearly aimed at Trajan and are at least partly articulated through the figure of Alexander (as well as through the Cynic heroes Heracles and Diogenes of Sinope).[9] Plutarch goes a step further by labelling Alexander a philosopher in his *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*.

Richard Stoneman's insightful 2003 article 'The Legacy of Alexander in Ancient Philosophy' is an excellent jumping-off point for discussing contrasts between the philosophical or quasi-philosophical Alexander of Dio

[6] For example Stadter and Van der Stockt 2002.

[7] According to Jones' proposed chronology (1966), Plutarch wrote little under Domitian (the *Lives of the Caesars* and *Consolatio ad uxorem*) and died shortly after Hadrian ascended the throne; the earliest of the *Parallel Lives* (probably *Epaminondas-Scipio*) was published no earlier than 96. Since Trajan ruled from 98 to 117 and *Alexander-Caesar* is one of the later pairs of *Lives*, it seems more than likely that the *Life of Alexander* was composed under Trajan. The *De Alex. Fort.* may have been written before 98, but there is no evidence beyond its highly rhetorical nature that indicates that this is a 'work of youth', as it has often been labelled; its theme of conquest, at any rate, has much more relevance for Trajan than for Domitian. See Koulakiotis 2006: 173, c.f. Brown 1967: 359; Jones 1966: 70.

[8] Among the fragments of the *Parthika* that are attached to specific books, Trajan is first named in one concerning Book 8 (*FGrH* 156 F 37 = *Joann. Lyd. De mag.* III 53 p. 142, 16 W); presumably this is what has led to Bowie's conclusion that Books 8–17 concern Trajan's campaigns (2016: 414).

[9] On the Cynic tradition in general see Höistad 1948; for the imperial understanding of Cynicism see Trapp 2007: 36–7.

Chrysostom and Plutarch, on the one hand, and ones found in other philosophically interested texts. Rejecting scholarly assumptions that the Roman Alexander is a product of early Peripatetic or Stoic 'traditions of hostility' towards the Macedonian king, Stoneman sees him as a figure of general utility for philosophers. This includes Stoics, but even more prevalently their Cynic forefathers, for whom good kings are equated with good men: in other words, the Cynic 'king' is not a type of political office holder at all, but a type of human being. Stoneman also sees Dio and Plutarch as the first Roman imperial authors to incorporate Alexander into a 'genuine philosophical discussion', and as part of a specifically Greek discourse that runs parallel to the Roman discourse (rather than being an offshoot of the latter).[10] Both points support my argument that the styling of Alexander as a philosopher or a potential philosopher is part of a limited discourse that is decisively Hellenocentric and is at the same time motivated by Trajan's own profile as a philhellene who was also an admirer of Alexander the military hero. I begin with a summary of Alexander's philosophical associations in Dio and Plutarch (with a brief but essential detour into Pliny the Younger), then embellish on the distinction Stoneman sees between those two authors and other philosophers in and around Trajan's reign who wrote in Greek. Like Dio and Plutarch, all are centrally interested in philosophy, but only Dio and Plutarch make Alexander a living representative of it. A running theme throughout this discussion is the relationship between Alexander and Diogenes of Sinope, where Diogenes is always preferred to Alexander when they meet or are otherwise compared, even in Dio and Plutarch. The latter are unusual in letting Alexander come near to reaching Diogenes' level of philosophical wisdom.

Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch (and Pliny)

My approach to philosophical views of Alexander operates under a few premises. First, it seems to me that each writer defines *philosophia* however he wants to define it in a particular context. Dio Chrysostom mixes Platonic, Stoic and Cynic elements throughout his corpus; Plutarch aligns himself with the Platonic Academy while incorporating ideas from other philosophical schools. The same principle goes for philosophical writers like Musonius, Epictetus and Maximus of Tyre who have been handed down to us as adherents of particular schools (e.g. Stoic for Musonius and

[10] Stoneman 2002: 339.

Epictetus, Platonic for Maximus) but whose writings nevertheless show a variety of influences.[11] Michael Trapp calls Maximus primarily a 'spokesman for Philosophy' – a phrase we may apply to a number of our writers.[12] It is therefore less important, for my purposes, to determine what kind of philosophical school Alexander is being associated with at any given moment than the very fact that this warrior and world conqueror can be employed as a mouthpiece for philosophy at all. Second – and deeply related to the general privileging of philosophy over non-philosophy (as opposed to favouring one school over the other) – is the self-reflexive nature of these writers' conceptions of philosophy. For men like Dio and Plutarch who engage with (rather than disengage from) politics, philosophy becomes the defining quality of good rulers – that is a good ruler must by definition be some sort of philosopher. But it is precisely because world conquerors are *not* philosophers that would-be advisors to philosophers like Dio and Plutarch exist. What does it mean for a philosopher to imagine Alexander as something so close to himself – to not only see Alexander as a philosopher like himself, but to see himself as 'an Alexander' as well? Finally, it seems futile to distinguish philosophy from rhetoric (and this is probably true in general of imperial literature, whose authors are steeped in classical literature of all genres). Even if we think of the creation of a 'philosophical Alexander' as itself a sort of rhetorical game, it is worth asking why this image is rhetorically desirable for some writers and not others.

The association between Alexander and philosophy is most complex and ambiguous in Dio, who exploits negative stereotypes about Alexander while creating new, positive ones – depending on what lesson he means to give Trajan and in which oration. Alexander appears in three of Dio's four *Kingship Orations*. *Or.* 1 begins with an anecdote that makes an implied comparison between Alexander and Trajan, the addressee: having relayed the story of how the flautist Timotheus deliberately chose music that would rouse the high-strung and passionate temperament of

[11] Van Geytenbeek (1963) points out that Musonius' interest in living according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν ζῆν) can be seen as both Stoic and Cynic (23–5); his division of the ways in which virtue can be acquired (through nature (φύσις), theoretical knowledge (μάθησις) and practical exercise (ἄσκησις)) is both Stoic and Aristotelian (29). Long (2002: 4) emphasises that Socrates was Epictetus' favourite paradigm and argues that Epictetus has turned the Cynic Diogenes into a Stoic icon (60). Schofield emphasises the three different modes of instruction Epictetus attributes to Socrates, Diogenes and Zeno to accomplish the single goal of teaching philosophy (2007: 72); see note 40. Trapp sees Maximus' Platonism as unproblematically incorporating elements from the rival Peripatetic and Stoic schools, in the style of the Middle Platonists (1997: xxii–xxx).

[12] Trapp 1997: xxv.

Alexander, Dio laments that the musician did not match his warlike strain (*polemikos nomos*) with those that would make the king's soul (*psuchē*) more just (*dikaia*), reasonable (*phronimos*), temperate (*sōphrōn*) and humane (*philanthrōpos*) (*Or.* 1.1–3). Dio sees himself as a better version of Timotheus, who directs words towards Trajan that are not only manly (*andreioi*) and high-minded (*megalophronai*), but also a combination of vigorous (*sphodroi*) and gentle (*praioi*), warlike (*polemikoi*) and peaceful (*eirēnikoi*), law-abiding (*nomimoi*) and truly kingly (*tōi onti basilkoi*) (1.4–5). But Timotheus' knowledge is insufficient to make Alexander moral – that is: in Dio's terms he cannot set a philosophical example for Alexander. Dio's words to Trajan refer to the philosophical basis for his instruction: 'So then, what subject would seem appropriate and worthy of your goodwill, and where can I, a wandering man, self-taught in philosophy (*autourgoi tēs sophias*) find the absolutely perfect thing to say? . . . There are many themes in philosophy' (1.9–10).

After this, he embarks on the characteristics and disposition of the ideal king. *Or.* 1's Alexander is depraved by his wealth and luxury, but as an analogy to Trajan – who is about to be educated by Diogenes – the oration hints that Alexander would have been dispositionally able to benefit from the sort of philosophical education Dio is offering.[13] *Or.* 4 features an even more blatantly troublesome Alexander, again standing in for Trajan (who is in danger of appearing like Domitian), and in dialogue with Diogenes, who stands in for Dio himself.[14] But Alexander has many of the qualities that would allow him to appreciate Diogenes. He is courageous man, and courageous men love the courageous (4.15); his nature allows him to absorb the superficial lessons of the sophists, but will still benefit from a disciple of Zeus or a Zeus-like teacher telling him clearly what his duty is (4.38).[15] As we shall see, while the heroism of Diogenes is very often the main point of any Diogenes anecdote, Dio presents him here as an earnest teacher of kings (that is as a Platonic-Stoic rather than a Cynic), rather than simply a useful humiliator of the powerful. Also notable in *Or.* 4 is Diogenes-Dio's use of the word *anikētos*, invincible. When Alexander asks Diogenes how one could be the best king, Diogenes scolds him by answering that no one can be a bad king because kings are the best among men, and there is no such thing as a 'bad good man'. The king is

[13] 1.3: οὕτως ἀθλίως εἶχεν ὑπὸ ἐξουσίας καὶ τρυφῆς.

[14] For analysis see Moles 1983 (summarised in Moles 1990: 348–50).

[15] The contrast between the Heracles-qua-son-of-Zeus model of education and the sophists was introduced earlier by Dio at 4.31.

the bravest (*andreiotatos*), most just (*dikaiotatos*) and most humane (*philanthrōpotatos*), and is unable to be conquered (*anikētos*) by any toil or desire. *Anikētos* seems undeniably a reference to Trajan's adoption of the Herculean epithet *invictus*,[16] which his admired Julius Caesar had adopted and is attested in its Greek form in inscriptions found in Sipylum and Gordos Iulia.[17]

It is in *Or.* 2 that Alexander becomes an authority on philosophy, espousing Homeric wisdom on good kingship. Here, as in *Or.* 4, Alexander is a Trajan figure, but now the interlocutor is Philip (clearly representing Nerva) who in a reversal of the father-son hierarchy is schooled in kingship by Alexander.[18] After noting that, according to Homer and Hesiod, a king should properly study both rhetoric and philosophy (*Or.* 2.24), Alexander adds that a king should limit the type of philosophy he is willing to study; he need not study it to the ends of perfection (*pros to akribestaton*), but he must live unpretentiously and simply (*aplastōs . . . kai aplōs*), proving himself in his actions (*tois ergois*) to have a character that is humane (*ēthos philanthrōpon*), gentle (*praion*), just (*dikaion*), lofty (*hupsēlon*) and brave (*andreion*), delighting in beneficence (*chairōn euergesiais*), which is closest to the nature of the gods (*engutatō tēs tōn theōn*) (2.26). (Note that Alexander-Trajan of *Or.* 2 uses one of the same words for the ideal king, *philanthrōpos*, as the philosopher Diogenes does in *Or.* 4.) He should listen to the teachings of philosophy but should most of all delight in Homer and Hesiod (*Or.* 2.27). This particular set of ethical virtues mirrors those found in *Or.* 1.4–5, noted earlier, which added a dose of humanity to martial value. The alignment of Alexander with philosophy is facilitated by Dio's seeming absence as an interlocutor. Moles reasonably suggests Dio makes a second-hand appearance here as Aristotle, whom Alexander calls the Phoenix to his Achilles (*Or.* 2.15.).[19] But Dio's thought, naturally, also lies behind Alexander's best philosophical insights (i.e. those voiced elsewhere by Dio). It is interesting to note that at least one of Dio's translators assumes Alexander is Dio's mouthpiece in *Or.* 2.[20] The ambiguity is key: Dio *qua* Dio cannot literally stand for Trajan, but he can collapse the distance between his own

16 Weinstock 1957.

17 Sipylum: IGR IV 1333 (AD 102–17); Gordos Iulia: IGR IV 1738 (AD 110–11). References found in Kühnen 2008: 169, nn. 45 and 46.

18 For this reversal, see Asirvatham 2010: 196–9.

19 Moles 1990: 340.

20 Cohoon 1932: 49.

philosophical and imperial authority by creating the image of a 'philosophical Alexander' who embodies a mix of Dionic wisdom and Trajanic militarism.

Plutarch makes a more direct connection between Alexander and philosophy than Dio, in his *bios* of the king and in the first of the two display speeches that have come down to us as *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute* (*On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*), a rebuttal to the Livian contention that Alexander benefitted more from fortune than from his own virtues (Livy 9.17.3).[21] Alexander's love of philosophy is emphasised in the *Life of Alexander* as part of his early education. He writes a letter 'on behalf of philosophy' (*huper philosophias*) to Aristotle, urging him not to publish his teachings so Alexander would have sole access to them (*Alex.* 7.6). Despite his later estrangement from Aristotle, Plutarch tells us, Alexander was naturally disposed towards philosophy (*pros philosophian empephukōs*), and this never left his soul (*Alex.* 8.5). As prince and then as king, Alexander is also frequently mentioned in the company of philosophers like Aristotle and, further from home, Calanus and Dandamis in India. But he comes closest to being identified (identifying himself, in fact) as a philosopher in Plutarch's rendition of his famous meeting with Diogenes. (The story is first attested in Cicero,[22] but plausibly originated with Diogenes' pupil Onesicritus, who was on Alexander's campaign.[23])

In *Alex.* 14 Plutarch tells us that, after Alexander was proclaimed leader of the Corinthian League, he expected Diogenes to join the many statesmen and philosophers who came to congratulate him. When the latter continued his leisure in a suburb of Corinth, Alexander came to him personally and asked him if he wanted anything, to which he replied 'Yes: stand a little out of the way of the sun' ('*mikron . . . apo tou ēliou metastēthi*', *Alex.* 14.4).[24] As a result of this, Alexander admired Diogenes for scorning him and proclaimed to his soldiers, who saw fit to mock the φιλόσοφος: 'If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes' (*ei mē Alexandros ēmēn, Diogenēs an*

[21] See also Cicero *Tusc.* 3.21 on Alexander's inability to make use of his great fortune. Dionysius of Halicarnassus defends the Romans against the charge they were favoured by fortune (1.4) similarly to how Plutarch defends Alexander.

[22] In *Tusc.* 5.92, Cicero calls for philosophers to model themselves on figures like Anacharsis, Socrates, Xenocrates, and Diogenes, who disdained earthly possessions, even when offered by kings. The figure most willing to reject gifts from powerful figures, Cicero says, was Diogenes, who, when Alexander asked him if he wanted anything, replied he wished Alexander would stand a little out of the way of the sun ('*nunc quidem paululum*' *inquit* '*a sole*'), since he was hindering him from sunning himself (*offecerat videlicet apricanti*).

[23] BNJ 134 T 3: see commentary of Whitby 2016, *loc. cit.*; Pearson 1960: 92. For a survey of Alexander-Diogenes stories through late antiquity see Buora 1973–4.

[24] Arrian (*Anab.* 7.2.1) tells a similar story.

ēmēn, 14.5). In *De Alex. Fort.* Plutarch further explains the meaning of Alexander's words (which he repeats in the same order): he meant that if he were not actively practising philosophy – that is following in the footsteps of Heracles, Perseus and Dionysus in the pursuit of civilising the world – he would be devoted to philosophical theorising like Diogenes was (331 F-332A). Heracles is a recurring figure in *De. Alex. Fort.* 2 in particular, and is directly connected to Alexander through ancestry (334D); note that Plutarch uses the Trajanic-Heraclean epithet *anikētos* (which we saw in Dio *Or.* 2.24) four times in *De Alex. Fort.* directly of Alexander. (There is a contrast, however, with Dio, whose Diogenes uses it to describe the ideal philosopher, and in ethical rather than military contexts.)[25]

The idea that Alexander uses philosophy to civilise the world dominates Part I of *De Alex. Fort.* It is here that for the first (and possibly last) time a Greek or Roman writer equates Alexander himself with philosophy.

> This is the discourse of Fortune (*ho tēs Tuchēs logos*), who claims that Alexander is her own accomplishment, and hers alone. But there must be a response on behalf of philosophy (*huper philosophias*) – or, rather, on behalf of Alexander (*mallon d' huper Alexandrou*), who will be irritated and annoyed if anyone thinks he received as a gift, even from Fortune, the empire he has won at the price of much blood and successive wounds . . . against unconquerable forces, numberless tribes, uncrossable rivers, and mountains unreachable by bow-and-arrow, escorted by good counsel, manliness, endurance, and self-control (*euboulia kai andreia kai karteria kai sōphrosunē parapempomenos*). (326D–E)

The combination of military and ethical attributes here recalls Dio's depiction of Alexander-Trajan in the Kingship Orations, but – inasmuch as Plutarch actually defines this combination as philosophy itself and embodies it in Alexander's flesh and blood – he takes things a step further.[26] Plutarch's presentation of *philosophia* gains more specificity in his attribution of the cosmopolitan ideal to Alexander, when he draws a contrast between the man whom he considers the originator of cosmopolitanism, Zeno the Stoic, and the king, who put the ideal into action. Whereas Zeno believed humankind should live in a single polity, sharing a life and social order like a herd that feeds together on a common field, Alexander came as

[25] *De Alex. Fort.* 335A; 337A; 339B x 2.

[26] Plutarch's emphasis on Alexander's wounding (eleven instances; see Gilley 2009, 41–2) in *De. Alex. Fort.* appears to be an Iliadic touch that serves to humanise this godlike hero (on heroic wounding in Homer see McCoy 2013: 1–36). If Alexander embodies philosophy here, it would also imply that Alexander's wounds lend Homeric grandeur to philosophy as well.

> a common, heaven-sent governor and mediator over all people (*koinos . . . theothen harmostēs kai diallaktēs tōn holōn*) who united everyone, mixing together their lives and customs, and who bid all to consider the whole inhabited earth as their fatherland (*patrida . . . tēn oikoumenēn prosetaxen ēgeisthai pantas*) . . . and to consider good men as family and evil men as foreigners (*suggeneis de tous agathous, allophulous de tous ponērous*), and not to consider the distinction between 'Greek' and 'barbarian' (*to . . . Hellēnikon kai barbarikon*) to be matter of cloak and shield versus sword and jacket, but to believe that Greekness was marked out by virtue and the barbarian by vice (*to men Ellēnikon aretēi to de barbarikon kakiai tekmairesthai*). (*De Alex. Fort.* 329 C)

This passage has been enormously influential. It was Plutarch's characterisation of Alexander as a great unifier that led W. W. Tarn (following the example of Droysen) to argue that Plutarch's attribution of the unifying idea to Zeno is anachronistic and that it originated, in fact, with Alexander.[27] As I have argued in detail elsewhere, however, this image of Alexander as a civilising philosopher-of-action is unlikely to be Alexander's nor attached to a particular Hellenistic philosophical school, and indeed has strong resonances with the contemporary Roman political ideology of *humanitas*, an idea that combines Greek *paideia* (education, in the active sense) with *philanthrōpia* (generosity).[28] On this reading, the strongly 'Hellenic' terms in which Alexander's *humanitas* is couched – in which the 'Greek' is seen as the full moral opposite of the 'barbarian' – signals an attempt on Plutarch's part to Hellenise Roman ideology. A Hellenised, philosophical Alexander allows Plutarch to identify his own milieu, philosophy, as the foundation on which the Roman civilising ideology rests. As such, his glorification of an often overtly Trajanic Alexander as a philosopher links the philosophical self with the ruler.

The contrast with Pliny the Younger is instructive. Like Dio and Plutarch, Pliny was a would-be advisor to the emperor; while he does not overtly present himself as a philosopher, he uses philosophical tropes throughout his writing, including his personal letters, and was an admirer of Epitectus, among other philosophers.[29] Both Pliny's *Panegyricus*, which he delivered to Trajan in 100, and Dio's *Kingship Orations* counsel Trajan

[27] Tarn 1948: 399–449. [28] Asirvatham 2005.

[29] Miriam Griffin has recently described him as one of those who 'make use of and recognize philosophical language and patterns of thought, consciously or at least semi-consciously, without regarding themselves as adherents of a school or as purveyors of its doctrines' (2007: 451); see Griffin 2007 *infra* for Pliny's celebratory references to the returned philosophers, his early exposure to philosophy and his belief that philosophers should serve as living examples of their precepts, embodied by Euphrates and Epictetus.

on his rule (one directly, the other indirectly). Just as Plutarch emphasises the φιλανθρωπία and παιδεία of Alexander (as well as of the best Roman generals), Pliny praises Trajan's *humanitas* numerous times (*Pan*. 2, 3, 4, 24, 47 (indirectly), 49, 71), and Plutarch's idea that Alexander was a heaven-sent (*theothen*) governor of the world resonates strongly with Pliny's description of Trajan as divinely chosen (*divinitus*, *Pan*. 1).[30] Pliny also calls Trajan by his Heraclean epithet, 'invincible', using the Latin *invictus* (*Pan.* 8) – that is; the *anikētos* Dio used of the ideal philosopher and that Plutarch used of Alexander himself. Latin writers are not, on the whole, very complimentary towards Alexander, but if we were expecting a positive Latin Alexander to appear anywhere, it would be during the reign of this relatively admired emperor who was rumored to admire the Macedonian king. And yet Alexander does not figure into the *Panegyricus*, nor does he appear in any of Pliny's letters, including those written to Trajan (which comprise Book 10 of his *Epistulae*). Alexander's absence in Pliny reinforces that Dio's and Plutarch's Trajan-conscious image of him is somehow essentially Greek – even if it that is not the only Greek response to Alexander.

Alexander without Philosophy, in and around the Time of Trajan

Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch stand alone in Greek literature in their active creation of a philosophical or potentially philosophical Alexander, which appears to be a function of their particular mode of intellectual (and, to some extent, real-life) engagement as Greek intellectuals with Roman imperial politics. For writers who are, on the other hand, uninterested in articulating a Hellenised version of the conquering ideology, Alexander has little specific ideological (as opposed to anecdotal) importance. Sometimes he does not appear at all. When he does, he very often serves as a useful foil to one of the great philosophical heroes of the age: Diogenes.

Musonius Rufus

There is no better place to start than with Musonius Rufus, the first-century philosopher whose famous pupils included Epictetus and, according to Fronto, Dio Chrysostom (*Ver. Imp*. i.1).[31] Like Dio, Musonius was exiled,

[30] For Trajan's 'theology of the Jovian principate' see Beaujeu 1955: 69–73.

[31] This is suggested by internal evidence from Epictetus, who mentions, for example, that 'Rufus' once criticised him for failing to discover the missing step in a syllogism (*Disc*. 1.8.32).

and in fact suffered that fate twice. Banished by Nero under suspicion of connection with the Pisonian conspiracy (Tac. *Ann.* 15.71*; Philostr. V. A.* 7.16), he returned to Rome under Galba but was eventually banished again by Vespasian (Tac. *Hist.* 3.81, 4.10, 4.40), not to return again until Titus became emperor. Alexander does not appear anywhere in Musonius' corpus, but he is worth examining as an example of a philosophical writer who shares many of Dio's and Plutarch's concerns about kingly ethics but who, unlike them, does not avail himself of a philosophical Alexander.

All we possess from Musonius are twenty-one discourses, dialogues, and diatribes, and thirty-two short sayings, passed down by his students and transmitted to us by Stobaeus (to whom their titles evidently belong).[32] These were written in Greek, suggesting Musonius taught in Greek, but he was a native Italian from Etruria and therefore presumably existed outside the Hellenocentric world of Dio and Plutarch. But like Pliny, Dio, and Plutarch (who, in addition to regularly musing on the qualities of rulers, wrote a treatise entitled *To an Uneducated Ruler* (*Ad principem ineruditum*)), Musonius was interested in ideal kingship, as well as in the relationship between advice-giving philosophers and rulers.

Of particular relevance is *Diss.* 8, entitled *That Kings Should Also Study Philosophy* (*Hoti philosophēteon kai tois basileusin*), which purports to record Musonius' conversation with a Syrian king who approached him. (The resonances with Dio's *Kingship Orations* are striking; perhaps we are seeing in Dio's works a direct influence from Musonius, enhanced considerably by the author's own literary artistry.) Musonius tells the Syrian king that no one is more suited to study philosophy than him, since, as a king, he must protect (*sōzein*) and benefit (*euergetein*) his people (line 6). We can compare this, for example, to Dio *Or.* 1.23, where Dio-as-narrator states that the true king enjoys conferring benefits (*euergetein*) even more than his beneficiaries enjoy receiving them, and to *Or.* 1.54, in which Dio meets an old woman in a place sacred to Heracles, where she is a protection (*sōtēria*) for sheep.[33] Musonius also asserts that a king should be an emulator of Zeus (*zēlōtēs . . . tou Dios*) and a father of his subjects (*patēr tōn archomenōn*, line 83). We can compare this to Dio's assertion that practically all Greek and barbarian kings worthy of the title have been pupils and emulators of Zeus (*tou theou toutou mathētai te kai zēlōtai*, *Or.*

[32] These were arranged by Peerlkamp (1822). For translation and discussion of all of Musonius' fragments see Lutz 1947; for further analysis see Van Geytenbeek 1963.

[33] That well-worn metaphor for kingship, most familiar from Socrates' assertion to Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, that the art of the shepherd is concerned only with the good of his subjects (1.345D)

1.38), and his claim that only the good king can be called 'the father of his people and his subjects' (*patēr tōn politōn kai tōn archomenōn*, *Or*. 1.22). We also see a connection between Musonius' *Diss*. 8 and Dio's *Kingship Oration* 4, but Musonius has taken things further than his pupil will. As we saw earlier, in Dio *Or*. 4.24 Diogenes tells Alexander that only a good man can be a king – or more precisely, that there is no such thing as a bad king – because kings are necessarily the best of men. But Musonius makes the stronger claim that good kings and philosophers are one and the same ('I believe that the good king is automatically and necessarily a philosopher, and a philosopher is automatically kingly').[34] He follows this claim with an extended syllogism: since a good king is a good man, and a good man is a philosopher, a good king must be a philosopher; furthermore, a philosopher is kingly because he is the most capable of governing (lines 104–11). To this degree, Musonius' claim is closer to the one Plutarch made about Alexander, who was both the ideal king and the ideal philosopher (in *De Alex. Fort*. 326D–E). Throughout *Disc*. 8, Musonius lists the attributes of the ideal king: he has prudence (*phronēsis*), justice (*diakaiosunē*), courage (*andreia*) and self-control (*sōphrosunē*); he is also high-minded (*megalophrōn*), beneficent (*euergetikos*) and generous (*philanthrōpos*). It is worth noting that Plutarch uses all of these words (or related ones) in *De Alex. Fort*. as values attaching specifically to Alexander or to good rule.[35] (Epictetus, as we will see, similarly conflates kingship and philosophy – in the form of Diogenes.)

Despite the fact that Musonius, Dio and Plutarch endow their ideal king with similar values, only Dio and Plutarch present Alexander as an ideal or potentially ideal king. To be fair, the only historical figures to appear in *Diss*. 8 are Socrates and (if we presume he is, indeed, historical and not an invention à la Plato) Musonius' unnamed Syrian king. Thus Alexander's absence in such a theoretical setting is not necessarily meaningful. But looking slightly backwards in time from Dio and Plutarch, we may be surprised at his absence in Musonius' words on Diogenes, who is featured in *Diss*. 9, *That Exile Is Not an Evil* (*Hoti ou kakon hē phugē*). If Musonius is aware of those stories about the meeting of Diogenes and Alexander, he gives no sign of it. His primary interest is in Diogenes' identity as an exile –

[34] Lines 101–3: ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι τὸν βασιλέα τὸν ἀγαθὸν εὐθὺς καὶ φιλόσοφον ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι καὶ τόν γε φιλόσοφον εὐθὺς καὶ βασιλικὸν εἶναι.

[35] φρόνησις: 336E; δικαιοσύνη: 330E x 2; 332C, 338C, 339B; ἀνδρεία: 326E, 328A, 332C x 2, 336A, 336E, 338D, 339B; σωφροσύνη: 326E, 327E, 328A, 332C, 338C, 338D, 343A; μεγαλόφρων: 336E; εὐεργέτης: 338C; φιλανθρωπ-ία: 332C, 333E, 342F; φιλάνθρωπος: 330A, 332D, 336E, 337B, 338D, 338E.

one with a model attitude. Musonius' subject is how one should cope, philosophically, with being exiled.

It is important to note that not all exiled figures mentioned in *Diss.* 9 are philosophers (Dion, for example, and Themistocles). Musonius' advice is meant to apply to all people who find themselves in exile. In 9.13–19 Musonius asks rhetorically if the *cosmos* is not the common fatherland of all mankind, as Socrates believed, and goes on to say: if you are reasonable (*epieikēs*), you will see yourself as a citizen of Zeus's city which is made up of both men and gods (*politēs tēs tou Dios poleōs, hē sunestēken ex anthrōpōn kai theōn*). There is a striking verbal echo here with Plutarch's claim in *De Alex. Fort.* 329 C (seen above) that Alexander was the common governor and mediator over all people, sent by god, who bade mankind (*hoi holoi*) to consider the entire inhabited earth (*hē oikoumenē*) their fatherland (*patris*). But there is a difference, and – whether or not Plutarch was aware of Musonius' philosophy – it is a telling one: it is between a decidedly apolitical cosmopolitan ideal and a political one. From Musonius' perspective, the City of Zeus is something that exists out there to be joined; it is the choice of the exile to accept it rather than pine for the *polis* in which he was born and raised. Plutarch's Alexander, by contrast, has been given a heavenly mandate (*theothen*) to create a new world order on earth in which those who are uncivilised (in Plutarch's Hellenocentric terms, *barbaroi*) are made into civilised beings (*Hellēnes*) – tacitly on the model of the Roman imperialist.

Epictetus

Musonius' student Epictetus was born a slave and was a contemporary of Dio and Plutarch and a teacher of Arrian. As was the case with Musonius, Epictetus' work comes down to us solely in the form of dialectical lessons (*Dissertationes*) and a philosophical handbook (*Enchiridion*) through Arrian.[36] Epictetus mentions Alexander four times in the *Dissertationes* (he does not appear in the *Enchiridion*), with three of those instances involving Diogenes, who was one of the philosopher's favourite paradigmatic figures (a far second to Socrates, but more frequently mentioned than Zeno).[37] It is possible that the meeting of Alexander and Diogenes (which our Roman Musonius passed by) is, at this point, a 'Greek' trope; it is

[36] The terminology is Long's (2002: 4).

[37] The fourth mention is in the context of friendship (which may or may not be included as part of self-interest). Epictetus says self-interest is the most important thing of all to living creatures so that if we feel the gods are standing in the way of our benefit, we will revile them and desecrate

difficult to say, however, since Epictetus does not show the Hellenising tendencies we see in Dio, Plutarch and much extant imperial literature written in Greek. In *Diss*. 2.13 (*On Nerves*, *Peri tou agōnian*), Socrates and Diogenes are presented as examples of men who learned how to speak truth to power – in Diogenes' case, to Alexander, Philip, pirates and the man who bought Diogenes as a slave[38] (2.13.24). In *Diss*. 3.24 (*On Not Being Affected by Things Not under Our Control*, *Peri tou mē dein prospaschein tois ouk eph' hēmin*), he presents Diogenes as a man free from attachment to possessions who thus could not be overpowered by Philip, Alexander, Perdiccas or the King of Persia (3.24.70). And in *Diss*. 3.22.92 (*On Cynic Philosophy*, *Peri Kunismou*), there is what ancient rhetorical handbooks called a 'double chreia' (an anecdote in which one figure answers another),[39] where Alexander and Diogenes exchange lines from the *Iliad* (2.24–5):[40] 'It is wrong for a man to sleep the whole night through who is an advisor/to whom the people are entrusted, and upon whom so many things are objects of care.' Taking the second line of the double chreia, Diogenes implies that, since he has no responsibilities, he is allowed to sleep.

What is clear from these Alexander-Diogenes passages is that their purpose is to exalt Diogenes and the Cynic way of life, not Alexander. In the first two instances, Alexander appears as one of a number of foils that illustrate aspects of Diogenes' refusal to bow to power; while the third anecdote may allude to Alexander's fabled love of the *Iliad*, Diogenes gets the last word: he will not lose sleep over the care of society, despite Alexander's attempt to shame him into waking up. Epictetus' comparative interest in Diogenes over Alexander is verified by the numbers: Epictetus mentions Diogenes twenty-six times in the *Dissertationes* and Alexander four times; he mentions Diogenes once in the *Enchridion*, and Alexander not at all. It is also worth noting the identities of the other individuals who act as foils to Diogenes alongside Alexander in the aforementioned passages, a list that includes Macedonians, Greeks and a Persian: Philip, Perdiccas, pirates, Diogenes' Corinthian owner and the King of Persia.

To be sure, Diogenes is an important figure for both Dio and Plutarch. For Dio, in fact, he is more important than Alexander. He uses Diogenes

their temples, just as Alexander did when he ordered the temple of Asclepius to be burned down when Hephaestion had died (*Disc*. 2.22.16–17).

38 Diogenes Laertius mentions Diogenes of Sinope's sale by pirates to a Corinthian in Crete named Xeniades in 6.74; in 6.29–30 he cites works by Menippus and Eubulus entitled *The Sale of Diogenes*.

39 Theon defines the double chreia in section 98 of his *Progymnasmata*.

40 In *Iliad* 2.24–5, the words belong to a dream Hera sent to the sleeping Agamemnon in the guise of Nestor.

as a mouthpiece not only in *Or*. 4, discussed earlier, but also in *Or*. 6, 8, 9 and 10, and in *Or*. 72 he defends the humble dress of philosophers like Socrates and Diogenes. Plutarch mentions Diogenes eighty-three times in his corpus; while fifteen of those instances belong to the *Alex*. and *De Alex. Fort*., the philosopher's presence in Plutarch's corpus hardly depends on Alexander. What distinguishes Epictetus from Dio and Plutarch, as far as Alexander goes, is his lack of motivation to imagine the latter as a historical and Hellenise-able king embodying philosophy.[41]

Pseudo-Diogenes

Meetings between Diogenes and Alexander are seen in another set of texts that emphasise Diogenes' excellence: the 'Cynic Epistles', a collection of letters with various authors and dates pseudonymously attributed to Anacharsis, Crates, Diogenes, Heraclitus and Socrates/the Socratics. Alexander appears only in the letters of Diogenes (Pseudo-Diogenes), and his most significant appearance is in *Ep*. 33, a relatively lengthy Socratic-style dialogue between Alexander and Diogenes that Victor Emeljanow (followed by Abraham Malherbe) places in a group of letters he dates to the second century AD.[42] *Ep*. 33 begins with a seemingly unique variation on the 'sun-bathing' episode we saw in Plutarch, and echoes Musonius' theme of philosophical resistance to power. When Alexander asks for Diogenes' hand, the philosopher mocks the king by calling him truly 'invincible' (*anikētos*), since he is capable of the works of the gods: like the moon, he is able to block out the sun (33.1). The rest of the dialogue takes up the themes of Diogenes' lack of concern for the king and his defence of poverty, and it ends with Alexander's pronouncement – 'If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes' (*all' ei mē ephthēn Alexandros genesthai, Diogenēs an egenomēn*, 33.4) – with a slightly different wording from Plutarch (*Alex*. 14.3 and *De Alex. Fort*. 331 F: *ei mē Alexandros ēmēn, Diogenēs an ēmēn*). At the end of the letter the author

41 To put a more positive spin on it: Epictetus' king is already embodied by Diogenes. In *Diss*. 3.21.19, Epictetus lists the three teaching styles the god gave to Socrates, Diogenes and Zeno, respectively: Socrates, the job of cross-examination (ἡ ἐλεγκτικὴ χώρα), to Diogenes, the job of kingship and castigation (ἡ βασιλικὴ καὶ ἐπιπληκτικὴ χώρα), and to Zeno, the job of teaching and creating doctrine (ἡ διδασκαλικὴ καὶ δογματικὴ χώρα). These are what Malcolm Schofield describes as, respectively, cross-examination, protreptic and didactic (2007: 72), and he helpfully encapsulates the rather puzzling terminology Epictetus uses for Diogenes' protreptic style, 'kingship and castigation', as follows: '"kingship" expresses (at least inter alia) the moral authority the Cynic philosophy commands, "castigation" the dominant register of his discourse' (Schofield 2007: 82).

42 Emeljanow 1967: 3–6; Malherbe 1977: 17.

says that Alexander, having tried to persuade Diogenes to join his campaign, let him go 'with difficulty' (*molis*).

Intriguing is Diogenes' use of the *anikētos* epithet that was associated with Trajan in the context of/for Alexander by Dio and Plutarch. Was the writer of this letter familiar with Trajan's use of *Invictus*? Or with the literary use of *anikētos* in the context of Alexander-Trajan? Whatever inspired the writer to have Diogenes call Alexander *anikētos*, the mocking tone of it shows that (as with Epictetus) the emphasis is on Diogenes' philosophical character, not on this silly king who conquers the sun by standing it its way. It is Diogenes who turns out to irresistible to someone accustomed to being irresistible due to his sheer political and military power. But again, as in Epictetus, Pseudo-Diogenes' Alexander is not particularly special: he is only one of a series of powerful individuals who provide a foil to Diogenes. Alexander is mentioned in *Ep*. 5 and 23 and is the addressee of 24 and 40, but *Ep*. 4, 14 and 15 are addressed to Antipater, and *Ep*. 5 and 45 are addressed to Perdiccas, who is also mentioned in a letter to Alexander that castigates him alongside Alexander and Dionysius for thinking that ruling is the same as making war (*Ep*. 40). Dionysius is also the subject of *Ep*. 8 and 32, and the addressee of *Ep*. 29. Finally, the Spartans and even the Greeks as a unit are also put in opposition to Diogenes in *Ep*. 27 and 28, respectively. Even among the letters Emeljanow dated to the second century (30–40), Alexander, Dionysius and Perdiccas are all presented as foils to Diogenes.

Maximus of Tyre

So far that we have seen that Musonius, Epictetus, and the Pseudo-Diogenic letters either ignore Alexander or use him purely as a foil to philosophy. It may seem somewhat unfair, however, to compare the student notes that comprise Musonius' and Epictetus' corpuses and some pseudonymous letters to the more elaborately wrought and allusive works of Dio and Plutarch. We might expect Alexander to fare better in the works of someone like the late second-century author Maximus of Tyre who, like other more 'literary' authors of the imperial age, makes a conscious display of erudition in the Greek literary canon. While Maximus in his *Orationes* is concerned above all to teach philosophy in a systematic and accessible way – his main touchstone is Plato – he mentions a wide variety of classical and Hellenistic authors ranging from epic and lyric poetry to tragedy and comedy to historiography and oratory (with a preference for Homer, whom he, like Dio's Alexander in *Oration* 2,

sees as both philosopher and poet). Maximus also refers to a concomitantly wide variety of mythological and historical figures, among them kings and generals.[43] Also in the classicising spirit (missing from Epictetus and Pseudo-Diogenes) is his use of the Greek-barbarian distinction to indicate cultural and moral (if not always 'ethnic', per se) differences.

But Maximus' orations show little more commitment to Alexander than do the other philosophical texts we have examined. Maximus does sometimes display Alexander as a 'Hellene'. In *Or.* 2, *Whether Images Should Be Set Up to Honor the Gods*, which argues that the nations of the world should worship the gods in whatever form they have traditionally done so, regardless of how it seems to a Greek audience, Alexander appears as a representation of Hellenic culture in contrast to the Indians.[44] Having conquered Persia and the Babylonians and marched to India, which only Dionysus had ever visited, Alexander captured Porus and struck up a friendship with Taxiles, who showed him all the marvels that were exotic to Greek eyes (*xenon ophthalmois Hellēnikois*, 2.6), including a 'statue' of Dionysus that was in fact a ravenous 100-foot long snake that greedily gobbled up sheep and oxen and was 'more like a tyrant than a god' (*kathaper turannōi mallon ē theōi*). But Alexander also appears as a negative *exemplum* of the effects of excessive power: in *Or.* 14, *By What Criteria Should One Distinguish Flatterer from Friend*?,[45] Maximus writes: 'The Macedonians flattered Alexander, and the work of the flattery was Persian trousers and barbaric *prokynesis*, as well as the neglect of Heracles, Philip and the hearth of the Argeads.'[46] And twice Alexander is unfavourably compared with Diogenes. In *Or.* 32 (an Epicurean response to critics of pleasure), Maximus argues that what would be unpleasurable for some people was pleasurable for Diogenes, and uses Alexander, a series of barbarian despots and one Greek of dubious Hellenicity as *comparandi* (Croesus, Xerxes, Cambyses, Sardanapalus and the Sybarite Smindyrides).[47] In *Or.* 36, *Diogenes and the Life of the Golden Age*,

[43] For a complete list of authors and mythological/historical figures mentioned by Maximus see Trapp 1997: xxxvi.

[44] The manuscript title is εἰ θεοῖς ἀγάλματα ἱδρυτέον, which Trapp (1997: 15) accepts as accurate.

[45] The manuscript title is τίσιν χωριστέον τὸν κόλακα τοῦ φίλου, which Trapp (1997: 124) accepts as accurate.

[46] Max. Tyr. *Or.* 14.8 κολακεύουσιν καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον Μακεδόνες· τῆς δὲ κολακείας τὰ ἔργα ἀναξυρίδες Περσικαὶ καὶ προσκυνήσεις βαρβαρικαὶ καὶ λήθη τοῦ Ἡρακλέους καὶ τοῦ Φιλίππου καὶ τῆς Ἀργεάδων ἑστίας. Plutarch also depicts Alexander as victim to the flatteries of men like Agnon, Bagoas, Agesias, and Demetrius in his *De Adulatore et Amico*, but as Trapp (1997: 125) notes, the details of Plutarch's and Maximus' discussion are rather dissimilar.

[47] Trapp (1997: 236–7) finds the manuscript titles of *Or.* 29–33 unsatisfactory and gives this grouping the title *The True End of Life: Virtue or Pleasure?*

Maximus makes a slightly different argument, stating that Diogenes was able to avert many calamities by living a simple lifestyle, and was thereby superior to Lycurgus, Solon, Artaxerxes and Alexander (in fact, he was even more free than Socrates, who endured the law court, prison and celebrity).[48] As in Epictetus and Pseudo-Diogenes, Alexander appears here as just one of a world of individuals – which happens to include the greatest wise men and lawmakers of the classical world, Lycurgus and Solon, Socrates and the Persian king Artaxerxes (an odd bedfellow) – who pale in comparison to Diogenes. Ultimately, Maximus' philosophical self-identification is with Diogenes.

Conclusion

Musonius, Epictetus, Pseudo-Diogenes and Maximus of Tyre have enough commonalities with Dio and Plutarch to make the latter's characterisation of Alexander as a philosopher or potential philosopher stand out. Perhaps by direct influence (at least in the case of Dio), Musonius' ideas concerning the relationship between philosophy and kingship – that the good philosopher and good king are the same – and the cosmopolitan ideal – that the exile should consider himself a citizen of the *cosmos* and the City of God – resonate strongly with some of the language used by our Trajanic *philalexandroi*. But whereas Musonius applies these ideas broadly, fully equating good men and good kings and good philosophers, and imagining a world without political borders, Dio and Plutarch apply them most vigorously to a single historical individual: Alexander. The Macedonian king does not appear in Musonius, but he does appear in Epictetus, most notably as one of a number of powerful men unable to overpower Diogenes. The overall theme of the scenes in which Alexander meets Diogenes is the latter's invincibility, and this is also the theme of Pseudo-Diogenes *Ep*. 33, where Diogenes mocks Alexander with the seemingly Trajanic epithet *Invictus*/*Anikētos*, then declines to go on his campaign with him. To the degree that Alexander admires Diogenes in *Ep*. 33, he comes off better than most kings in the Pseudo-Diogenes corpus, which treats them as uneducable (in *Ep*. 8, e.g., the author mocks the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse for becoming a teacher after his fall from power). Regardless,

[48] Trapp (1997: 281) uses this title instead of the manuscript title, *Whether the Cynic Life Is to Be Preferred* (Ἐι προηγούμενος ὁ τοῦ κυνικοῦ βίος).

Diogenes always maintains the upper hand; in *Ep*. 33 he does this by rejecting Alexander's desires. Finally, we have Maximus of Tyre, whose anecdotal use of Alexander is reminiscent of much else we find in Greek imperial literature: the king occasionally comes in handy but is not ideologically important. Again, Diogenes emerges as a figure of sweeping superiority, but does not stand in opposition to Alexander alone. Rather, Alexander is presented as an example among many others, both Greek and barbarian, who are inferior to Diogenes.

The melding of Alexander and philosophy in Dio and Plutarch is not total. For Dio, Alexander/Trajan always has the potential to fail; the philosopher- Alexander-of-arms of the *De Alex. Fort.* is impossible to take at face-value; and Alexander is hardly incorruptible in the *Life of Alexander*: at his lowest point, he is shown up by an important philosophical adversary, Callisthenes.[49] Nevertheless, as this consideration of contemporary and near-contemporary philosophical literature shows, philosophical discourse does not 'need' Alexander in the same way it needs Socrates, Diogenes and Zeno. Looking forward to the philosophers of the later Antonine period and beyond, we see that this continues to be the case: Alexander is not needed by Marcus Aurelius, who serves as his own ideal philosopher-king; Philostratus presents his Pythagorean hero Apollonius as a philosophical anti-Alexander. Of course, we can never know what is lost: there is always the possibility of unearthing a new philosophical Alexander in the Greco-Roman tradition, and we do know of philosophical Alexanders that exist outside of the Greco-Roman tradition as well;[50] the vast quantities of Christian literature we possess could well reveal surprises. But within extant secular Greco-Roman imperial literature, Dio's and Plutarch's Alexander, a great military conqueror and civiliser who is steeped in *philosophia* and reads, simultaneously, as Greek and Roman appears to be a peculiarly Trajanic product, even if he is not the *only* Trajanic Alexander. Given Alexander's long-standing reputation for tyrannical behaviour, he was not easy to idealise. Creating any version of such an image required opportunity, which I suggest came quickly in the form of Trajan, was seized upon by a couple of experimentalists, and disappeared just as quickly, at least within secular literature.

[49] See for example Asirvatham 2001.

[50] See for example Asirvatham 2012 on the Persian and Arabic traditions. Nizami's twelfth-century *Eskandar-nameh*, for example, presents Alexander as a model of moral probity who selflessly civilises the world with Islamic law.

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5 Christianising Alexander Traditions in Late Antiquity

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> Of the great figures of antiquity few are so abundantly documented and few so legendary as the emperor Julian. Perhaps only Alexander the Great, whom Julian admired, exerts a comparable fascination; but Alexander's career can more easily encourage flights of fantasy because the documentation is less good.
>
> Bowersock 1978, 1

Introduction: Appropriating Alexander

Alexander's career did indeed inspire 'flights of fantasy', not only for some emperors of Rome, but also for people high and low in all later ages, as this volume reflects. In this chapter we turn to the ancient Christian reception of the king. Surprisingly, this area suffers from a lack of scholarly attention, despite Christianity's impact on human history.[1] There may be many reasons for this, but one of the main ones must surely be that the field of patristic literature is vast and forbidding. At times it can be rather technical, and some genres, such as chronicles, have only recently come into fashion.[2] Many Christian authors stand outside our standard curriculum, if we are trained in classics or in ancient history, as David Potter has pointed out.[3] This chapter seeks to redress the balance by shifting the focus to the Christians and their contemporaries, the Greek- and Latin-speaking 'pagan' intellectuals of later antiquity.

1 First in the field was Klein's survey from 1988, which suffered from being printed in an inaccessible two-volume *Festschrift*. For a critical review of Klein's conclusions see Wirth 1993, 58–71, to whom the said *Festschrift* was dedicated. See now Djurslev 2020.

2 For the first fruits of an ongoing project see Burgess and Kulikowski 2013.

3 Potter 2014: 1. His remarks specifically concern the shadowy Hippolytus of Rome (*c*.170–235), who has not become a household name despite his importance for the computation of Christmas. Potter's point about classicists not knowing such Christian and Jewish authors well is apt – he himself confuses a chapter of Hippolytus with the book of Daniel on which Hippolytus was commenting. According to Potter, 'the images that Hippolytus was explaining were those of the beast of chapter 4 of the Book of Daniel'. Hippolytus is in fact representing Rome as the fourth beast of Daniel 7:7–8. Potter may have found the comments on the image of Rome in book 4 of Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* 4.5.1–2.

In modern studies of the Alexander tradition in the late antique period, however we define the chronological parameters, scholarly attention has been firmly fixed on the various versions of the ever-expansive *Alexander Romance*.[4] Much work has recently been done to place the linguistically diverse translations of this protean text in their contemporary contexts, especially in the vernaculars of Europe and Byzantium. One can naturally suggest that Christians of the Greek East and the Latin West came to accept the *Alexander Romance*, but Christians also talked about Alexander long before that happened (Christian versions in Greek and Armenian stem from the end of the fifth century AD). In what follows I explore the neglected passing remarks and longer digressions on Alexander to uncover the principal patterns of early Christian discourse. I concentrate on the types of interest in the Alexander figure they shared with their non-Christian peers so we can see how the Christians appropriated the figure for their own purposes.

'Pagans' and Christians

Before we examine examples from early Christian texts, it is beneficial to get a sense of how non-Christians worked with the legacy of Alexander in relation to Christians. I offer a few examples from antique 'pagans' who engaged with Christians in order to reveal just how blurred the boundaries between the intellectual traditions of Christians and non-Christians could be. This section reflects some common interests and highlights the differences in arguments made.

We begin with the subject of Bowersock's comparison, Julian, who famously did not remain Christian. Nevertheless, as Susanna Elm has argued, his polemics were formative for the Church in the fourth century AD, and so his writings may act as a good point of departure into the intellectual milieu.[5] From Anthony Kaldellis' contribution in this volume (Chapter 10) we notice Julian often pauses to reflect on the Macedonian king in his writings, a common tendency in the literature of late antique Greece and Rome. At other times he actively uses Alexander to reinforce an argument, and one such example occurs in his fragmentary *Against the Galileans*:

[4] For an overview of recent *Alexander Romance* scholarship see in particular Jouanno 2002; Stoneman 2008.

[5] Elm 2012.

> Who believes that to win in war is worse than suffering defeat? Who is so senseless? But, if my point is correct, show me one general of the likes of Alexander or Caesar among the Hebrews. There is no such general among them. By the gods, I know that mentioning the two would insult them, but I do it anyway because they are famous (*gnōrimoi*). We have many other generals who are inferior to these two, but they are unknown to the masses; yet even each one of those generals is more remarkable than all those the Hebrews have ever had.[6]

In Julian's *Caesars* Alexander and Caesar fought in words in order to be hailed the best ruler among the deified humans. In this passage one rather thinks of Plutarch's pairing of the two lives, and the later part of the text recycles the adage that any Roman general could have beaten anybody else in battle.[7] *Against the Galileans* and *The Caesars* naturally have quite different purposes in that the former is a polemic directed against (Jews and) Christians, whereas the latter is a political satire. For both works it is true that the classical tradition looms large, as we would expect from a person who is a member of the educated elite in imperial society.

This passage is, however, noteworthy because Julian uses these figures to denigrate Jewish (and implicitly Christian) culture. He naturally uses many other examples from the Jewish, Christian and classical traditions against both Jews and Christians, but this is the only time he uses Alexander (and Caesar) for the purpose of comparing military might. One can appreciate why Julian, as Roman emperor and general, would make such an argument as the leader of the most successful military enterprise. It is surprising that Julian claims that the Jews had no commanders because he must .. Maccabeus. Julian must have known the Hebrew commanders of the Old Testament such as Samson, David and Judas Maccabeus.

This kind of dismissal is standard in the few other known polemical non-Christians. We mainly know of the philosopher Celsus (through Origen of Alexandria/Caesarea) and Porphyry of Tyre, whose fragments continue to attract much interest.[8] What Julian also shares with them is that his text only survives in fragments in second-hand authors; in Julian's case it is the writings of Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria. The bulk of the evidence thus comes from Christian authors who sought to combat 'pagan' arguments.[9]

[6] Julian *Against the Galileans* § 202 (218b–c).

[7] Livy 19.17.8–14; Ammianus Marcellinus 30.8.5. Cf. Plutarch *On the Fortune of Rome* 13 (326a–c) for an alternative take.

[8] See in particular Johnson 2013 with the discussion of fragment theories in Magny 2014.

[9] For coverage of all three see Wilken 2003.

Besides Julian, two other pagan authors are known to us who use Alexander against the Jews/Christians directly: the only known example from Julian is quoted earlier in this chapter. Porphyry uses Alexander to interpret the Old Testament prophecies of Daniel, making an interpretation of scripture of his own in which he attempts to dismiss previous Christian interpretations. Celsus makes a most allusive reference to Alexander.

Let us look at the latter first. In Origen's *Against Celsus* (*c.*248) Celsus is represented as a Platonic philosopher whom Origen repeatedly dismisses. It is not quite so straightforward as an intellectual battle between the two. In the second book of his *True Discourse* Celsus is said to have invented a Jewish character to act as his mouthpiece against the Christians. This invention shows Celsus was aware the Jews too were engaged in dismissing Christian claims to the Hebrew Scriptures. The passage, which is relevant to us, does indeed depend on knowledge of several literatures and contexts. Celsus' Jewish character asks pointedly about the moment Jesus dies upon the Cross, enquiring whether 'Jesus' blood was like *ichor such as flows in the veins of the blessed gods*?'.[10] As is well known, this particular remark is normally attached to Alexander in his own tradition rather than that of Jesus. Celsus' Jewish character is suggesting Christians flattered Jesus by considering him divine, even if it was self-evident to all onlookers that Jesus was a mortal man because he died upon the Cross. The transmission of the saying is thus very fluid: a Christian apologist (Origen) engages with a pagan philosopher (Celsus) who had invented a fictional Jewish character that dismissed the Christian claim that Jesus was divine. The dismissal was made with a Homeric line that is traditionally said by or about Alexander. This creative usage of *dramatis personae* and sayings (Latin *chria/chriae*; Greek *chreia/chreiai*) shows that material from Alexander's tradition could be adapted and reapplied rather liberally.

Porphyry was thought to have written the most successful critique of the Christians, to the extent that his books were officially condemned to be burned. This late third-century philosopher is mainly known for his work on Plotinus' *Enneads*, but he is also important for the present investigation. He worked with the same texts from the Old Testament and made learned arguments about it that the Christians found problematic. We learn from Jerome's preface to his *Commentary on Daniel* that Porphyry had performed a lengthy exegesis of Daniel. He did this in the twelfth book of his fifteen-volume work *Against the Christians*. Before Jerome's work several Christian bishops, including Methodius of Olympus, Eusebius of Caesarea

[10] Origen *Against Celsus* 2.36 incorporating Homer *Iliad* 5.340. Cf. Seneca the Younger *Letters* 59.12; Plutarch *Moralia* 180e; Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 12.6. For the historical use of the anecdote in Alexander's tradition see now Bosworth 2011, 45–7.

and Apollinaris of Laodicea, had already responded to Porphyry. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the mystic books of Daniel remained a severe problem for the Church. This is especially true for the East, in which commentaries on Daniel proliferated, whereas in the West, we know only of the one by Jerome. The main issue with the text was whether the prophet had been 'divinely inspired' and whom the prophet had viewed as the Messiah.[11]

Alexander's role in the book of Daniel was plain to Porphyry and the earliest Christian commentators.[12] For Hippolytus, to whom our earliest extent commentary is attributed, the he-goat of Daniel 8 symbolised Alexander. The goat destroyed the two-horned ram (Persia) with its single horn that was then broken up into four upon the sudden death of the he-goat. Jerome's reading supports this interpretation, and, from several points in Jerome's text, we learn Porphyry was well aware of that connection too. The problematic prophecies were, however, not Daniel 8, but Daniel 2 and 7. The former concerns the theory of the *translatio imperii*, the progress of four empires until the lasting fifth kingdom of God, as revealed by a statue of many metals in a dream vision to the Babylonian king. The latter concerns the same theory, but the revelation is instead four monstrous beasts and a god-like king only the prophet himself sees. In the Christian interpretation of the metals and beasts, Alexander's 'Greek' empire was often third on the list, but sometimes second or fourth.[13] It is highly significant that Porphyry is the only 'pagan' we know of who actively used the book of Daniel for his version of the *translatio imperii*. He identified the four beasts as (1) Babylon, (2) Media and Persia together, (3) Alexander and (4) the Successors, thereby suggesting the prophecies of Daniel culminated under the Seleucids and therefore concerned Seleucid matters rather than Roman history. This gravely problematised many Christian interpretations, which argued the fourth beast was Rome, so Christ's kingdom was still to come upon the death of the fourth beast.

In the Christian view Porphyry's most problematic argument was that Daniel had announced the coming of the Antichrist in the age of Antiochus IV (r. 175–164 BC). Porphyry thus disapproved of the Christian claims that advocated the future coming of the Antichrist. For Porphyry the events of

[11] For a general introduction to the Christian issues with the book of Daniel and their solutions see McCollough's contribution in Stevenson and Glerup 2008.

[12] See now Garstad 2017 for the hypothesis that the Theodotion version of Daniel recognises the he-goat as Alexander, and the author changes Alexander's route to fit with material from the *Alexander Romance*.

[13] For a detailed overview of the main interpretations see the tables of Inglebert 2001, 362–4.

the prophecies had already happened, as exemplified in Macedonian and Seleucid history. According to Jerome, Porphyry made many mistakes in interpreting the prophecies in this way, and it is noteworthy that many of the issues concerned chronology pertaining to Alexander, who was incorporated into the list of Persian kings. We cannot gauge how much Porphyry would have said about Alexander's Macedonians or the beginning of Hellenistic history under the Successors. Nevertheless, it proves the point that Alexander mattered to ancient interpretations of Scripture, which became an intellectual battleground that defined the scholarship of early Christianity.

Through their Christian intermediaries Celsus, Porphyry and Julian highlight some of the principal features of the late antique Alexander discourse that interested Christian intellectuals. These features include his sayings, actions and political appeal (military conquest) and the symbolism and ideas of the Old Testament, especially the succession of empires. There is much common ground in the Christian and non-Christian use of the material, but the interpretations vary. What is important to notice with these examples is that, while the three pagan authors differ only slightly from the Christians, they differ much more from their fellow non-Christian contemporaries, who would not have considered the Jewish and Christian material important. The three differ precisely because they had to engage with some of the material other classicising 'pagans' did not normally use in order to make counterarguments against the Christians. Writing against the Christians thus made them seem much closer to Christians, and therefore rather unusual in the context of Greek and Roman imperial literature more broadly.

It is important to note that, while we do not normally think of this range of material when we study Alexander, the Christian writers were an integral part of the imperial discourse on him. If we do not think of it, we may be led to believe the ancient Alexander featured only in full-length historical accounts and popular works such as the *Alexander Romance*, or in material culture in association with powerful political figures in Rome and abroad. Alexander did, however, become ubiquitous in early Christian texts from the Greek-speaking orator Tatian of Syria onwards (fl. mid second century), and many of these writings show how the Christians were adept in appropriating stories about Alexander directly from classicising material, or even their contemporaries.[14] For example, if Eusebius' *Church History* (6.22) is right in attributing the *Refutation of All Heresies* to Hippolytus,

[14] Tatian *Exhortation* § 2.1, § 36.1. Cf. Stoneman 2003, 334 n. 67.

then Hippolytus made a comment in it on Alexander's greatness to the exact same effect and verbatim as a contemporary sceptic, the philosopher Sextus Empiricus.[15] They both stated that no one in Alexander's day was as powerful as him, nor was any philosopher as great as Plato.

Yet early Christians engaged selectively with more than classicising contemporaries, the classical tradition and Jewish Scripture. As is well known, they also held two Jewish intellectuals in high regard – Philo of Alexandria, who worked at the turn of the eras BC and AD, and Flavius Josephus of the first century AD. These authors could perhaps be considered part of the 'classical tradition': both wrote in Greek and as part of the Helleno-Jewish tradition. Josephus' works were also 'translated' into Latin several times.[16] Yet they also treated topics that few pagans took seriously, but the Christians did, and so they drew upon the works of these two authors extensively. There is even an ancient legend that Philo converted to Christianity.[17]

We now investigate the Christian engagement with some of the minor Alexander stories with Jewish origins before we turn to the one that made the greatest impact on the Christian tradition: the famous Josephan fiction that the Macedonian king visited Jerusalem en route to conquer Achaemenid Persia as the instrument of God.[18]

Classicising Jews and Christians

Let us begin with a story from Philo that was later appropriated by Augustine's famous teacher, Ambrose of Milan (*c.*340–97).[19] Philo reports that, when Alexander was in India, the king attempted to compel a virtuous Indian philosopher, Calanus, to travel with him to the West so he could display the 'barbarian' wisdom of the East.[20] Unfortunately for Alexander, the sagacious Indian gracefully declined, offering his reasons in a philosophical letter to the king. Philo cites the entire letter, which focusses

[15] Hippolytus *Refutation of all Heresies* 4.5.5 Markovitch = Sextus Empiricus *Against the Mathematicians* 5.89.

[16] Ps.- Hegesippus' *On the Fall of Jerusalem* (*c.*370s); a version of the *Jewish War* is attributed to the Church historian Rufinus; Cassiodorus (*c.*485–585), the founder of the famous Vivarium monastery at Monte Cassino, commissioned Latin translations of the *Jewish Antiquities* (books 1–20) and the first two books of *Against Apion*. For the Latin Josephus see further Pollard 2015 with bibliography.

[17] Runia 1993, 3–7. [18] Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 11.304–46.

[19] For a thorough account of Ambrose's use of Philo see Runia 1993, 291–311. Cf. Harmon 2017 on the use of exempla in Ambrose of Milan in general.

[20] Philo of Alexandria *On How All Good Men Are Free* § 97.

on the ascetic differences between Greeks and Indians. For sending this personal missive, Philo commends the Indian with an allusion to Zeno, famed founder of Stoicism, who had said it was impossible to compel a virtuous man to do any action against his will. The thrust of Zeno's saying is the very topic of Philo's treatise.

This report would surprise any Alexander historian. What we know about Calanus is that he was in fact the only one of his fellow philosophers to leave India behind to follow Alexander.[21] He was severely criticised for this action, but greatly commended for his self-control when he decided to end his life on his own terms on a public pyre during an illness. The Indian philosopher who rejected Alexander is normally known as Mandamis/ Dandamis, the ostensible leader of the 'naked philosophers' who spawned much legendary material.[22]

If we look beyond the typical Alexander histories, we can locate the Calanus story Philo was using. Athenaeus Mechanicus, roughly a first-century BC contemporary of Philo, wrote a treatise on siege-craft, which incorporated a line of Calanus' letter as quoted by Philo.[23] Alexander's literary tradition abounds with letters, and so it is no surprise that we should have a letter to Alexander on the authority of one of the philosophers of his court.[24] Indeed, some of the most famous ancient traditions that would matter to the Christians were Alexander's letters to Aristotle and the philosopher's responses. It thus seems to me that this exemplum of Calanus was floating around in the ocean of Alexander storytelling. Philo fished it up to support the philosophical conviction that he also underpinned with a remark from Zeno.

None of these philosophical words sufficed for Ambrose. In his famous *Letter* 37, addressed to Simplicianus (d. 401), his successor in the episcopate, he uses the letter of Calanus to support his argument about virtue as freedom and slavery as sin.[25] He too quotes the full letter, which he takes over verbatim from Philo. He is highly critical of the exemplum and of Calanus' missive: the letter is merely made of words (though good words) and, what is worse, they were written by a philosopher. Action and desire for death is what Ambrose recommends, and he supports his contention with three martyred virgins of

[21] Heckel 2006, 74, s.v. Calanus.

[22] See the lucid overview of the legends in Steinman 2012. Cf. Stoneman 2015.

[23] Athenaeus Mechanicus *On Machines* § 5. Cf. the discussion of the passage in Whitehead and Blyth 2004, 70.

[24] For Alexander's letters in the historiographical sources see now Monti 2016. For the letters of the *Alexander Romance* note the observations of Arthur-Montaigne 2014.

[25] Ambrose of Milan *Letters* 37.34–8 (*CSEL* 82(1).60–2).

Christ: Thecla, Agnes and Pelagia.[26] He adds three cases: the martyrdom of St Lawrence (d. 258), the three Hebrews in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3) and the Maccabean resistance to the Seleucid persecutors. The first example is explicitly compared to Calanus' letter, and Ambrose claims that Lawrence surpassed the empty words of Calanus by suffering death when his flesh was roasted over the fire.

This idea may seem rather ironic to us given the fact that what we know of Calanus is that he died on the pyre before Alexander's assembled army. Yet Ambrose does not seem to know that story as he only draws upon information from Philo. Naturally, he does not mention Philo at all, but accepts Calanus as the authority of the letter. He does not make the comparison with Zeno's view of freedom because the letter's aim is to expound the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:23, 'You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters.'

Ambrose's omission of material is thus due partly to his ignorance and partly to his desire to shape the anecdote in a way that supports his own argument. The comparative material is changed from what it is in Philo, with a different cast of characters – namely exempla of Jewish and Christian martyrs. The juxtaposition of material alters the meaning, although the sentiment on freedom at least seems quite close to Philo's conception of it. The important comparison for both Jew and Christian lies in what kind of behaviour defines the virtues of a philosopher, Jew and Christian. The testimony of both Philo and Ambrose is therefore important because it shows how authors did not always go back to the earliest sources for their actual information.

It is noteworthy that this adaptation of the anecdote has little bearing upon Alexander himself, who appears to be a member of the supporting cast rather than the protagonist.[27] He is merely a type of king, perhaps chosen for his fame, which makes him recognisable. His association with Greek and other types of philosophy is obvious. We need only think of his teacher Aristotle and Diogenes the Cynic. This pattern is not just true for literature: Andrew Stewart has stressed the link between philosophers and Alexander in late antique art and iconography.[28]

The king's conversations with the Indian Gymnosophists are enshrined in Alexander history, but, intriguing as they were, they were also some of

[26] Ambrose of Milan *Letters* 37.37. Thecla and Agnes suffered their passion at the mouths of wild beasts in the arena (37.38). The Antiochene virgin Pelagia leapt to her death from a rooftop in order to escape the immoral intentions of ribald Roman soldiers.

[27] *Pace* Klein 1988, 977–80. [28] Stewart 2003, 64.

most common in both rhetorical discourse and school exercises. In a recently republished monograph (originally from 1986) Graham Anderson wrote in connection with the philosophical encounters in Philostratus' *Apollonius of Tyana* that the story about the Indian philosophers is 'one of the most attractive *topoi* to a sophistic writer: it provided a cultural ethos, exotic appeal, scope for moralising and historical probity, while allowing an opportunity for the stock contrasts between Greek and barbarian, or sage and king'.[29] Clearly, the distant philosophers had the same appeal to Jewish and Christian writers. Anderson does indeed go on to point to the fifth-century Palladius of Galatia's history of the Egyptian Desert Fathers, *Lausiac History*, which contains an appendix on the Indian philosophers, attributed to the Alexander historian Arrian. In a recent piece Richard Stoneman has shown how light a touch Palladius needed to 'Christianise' Arrian's Indian ascetics, and it is notable that Ambrose too needed to make only light adaptations to the Philonic passage.[30]

To take another example of this light Christian appropriation of Alexander material, we turn to Josephus' story of the Jewish archer Mosollamus, who had apparently participated in the campaign of Alexander.[31] This archer is said to have shot down a bird so as to prove that divination by birds could not reveal the future. If the bird was unable to foresee its own death, why should one believe in the omens it gave? The story conveys the message that pagans were superstitious, and it is 'an Alexander-related story serving as the vehicle for a demonstration of Jewish religious superiority'.[32] The first Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339), parrots this tale, adding no features to enhance the effect of the story.[33] To Eusebius it could clearly be recycled to create the same argument against divination on behalf of the Christians. Again Alexander plays a minor role. His presence primarily marks the time and place of the incident. As was the case with the Indian philosopher, his appearance imbues the story with a false but compelling historicity.

Just as with Ambrose's unique use of Philo's remark about Alexander and the Indians, this story about the archer does not seem to have become popular. Only one later Christian uses it: George the Monk, a ninth-century chronographer in Constantinople. He refers to the same story, but names the archer 'Mosomachus'.[34] It is far from certain that he took the story from Josephus; he may rather have engaged with the version in Eusebius.

[29] Anderson 2014, 212. [30] Stoneman 2015.
[31] Josephus *Against Apion* 1.200–5, incorporating Hecataeus of Abdera *BNJ* 264 F 21.
[32] Stoneman 2008, 59. [33] Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel* 9.4.6–9.
[34] George the Monk 1.32–3.

George's is the only later remark with reference to the story. Therefore, even if Christian authorities accepted a Jewish tale, we should not automatically assume it became commonplace in Christian literature.

This Christian eclecticism is indicative of what Alexander-related material was useful for Christian arguments and what was not. We naturally do not have all early Christian literature to consider, so we cannot say for certain, but we can make educated guesses. For example, Josephus compares the biblical account of Moses' parting of the Red Sea, which enabled the Hebrews to escape the wrath of Pharaoh, with the story told of Alexander that God had granted his army passage at the Pamphylian Sea in order that he could conquer Persia.[35] No Christian accepts this comparison. Christians accepted, however, the story of the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek in early Ptolemaic Alexandria, the so-called Septuagint translation. Philo had already recorded that the commissioner of the translation, Ptolemy II, was the third in succession to the founder Alexander in the *Life of Moses* (2.29). Alexander did not have anything to do with the translation itself, but he was recognised as a key individual in the formation of the Ptolemaic dynasty and as a marker of the time after which the translation was carried out. Many Christians accepted this version after some initial disagreement in the age of the apologists, as Wasserstein and Wasserstein have shown in their work on the reception of the Septuagint legend.[36]

A Christian Adaptation of Josephus

The clearest example of Christian eclecticism is the fourth-century Latin adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War* (*c.*370), with supplementary material from *Against Apion* and *Jewish Antiquities*. Much is uncertain about this adaptation: the author and title are disputed, but the text itself was read widely in late antiquity and so survived into the Middle Ages much more securely than many classical authors. This text contains multiple references to Alexander that were not even in the original Josephus. For example, the author puts a comparison of the Romans and Alexander into the mouth of Herod Agrippa II, who says there was nothing great about Alexander

[35] Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 2.348. For Moses see Exodus 13:17–14:29; Psalm 136; Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 2.16.5. For Alexander in Pamphylia see Strabo *Geography* 14.3.9; Arrian *History of Alexander* 1.26.1–2; Appian *Civil War* 2.21.149; *Fragmentum Sabbaiticum BNJ* 151 F 1.2.

[36] Wasserstein and Wasserstein 2006, 95–109 (without Alexander), 113–31 (with Alexander).

because his Eastern campaigns were one long flight east in order to avoid fighting Rome in the West. Alexander had come to the ocean, but would not have been able to go beyond it, which the Romans had done by conquering Britain.[37] The author then goes on to use Hannibal too in this context of *comparatio* with the early history of Rome. Though engaging, these remarks are fairly common loci in both Greek and Roman literature, even if they are nowhere to be found in Josephus. The creative insertion of these loci into the Christian version is appropriate for an educated writer of Latin during the imperial period.

Other remarks are unsubtle alterations of what is already in Josephus. For instance, Josephus argues Alexander had given civil rights to the Jews so they could stay in Alexandria as part of his realm.[38] The Christian author, however, removes this piece of information about Alexandrian rights from the actual context and rearranges this information so it becomes an argument against the Jews.[39] At the Roman siege of the Jewish fortress of Masada (AD 74), Eleazar, the leader of the Jewish defenders, exhorted the Jews to commit mass suicide instead of being captured by the Romans. In his speech (he gives two in Josephus) he focusses on the efficiency of the Roman war machine and compares Alexander's actions with those of the Romans in Alexandria (Josephus says Egypt). Alexander had used the zeal of the Alexandrian Jews to keep the Egyptian population in check. He had given each people different places of residence so their cultures and religious practices should not mix. Even so, Jews and Egyptians collided occasionally, but Alexander quelled the conflicts and dispensed justice. Conversely, the Romans had little patience for what they perceived as Jewish fanaticism and routed 50,000 citizens (the number is 60,000 in Josephus for all of Egypt). The Romans were thus worse than Alexander and so should be feared much more in the case of a siege. To support Eleazar's argument, the Christian author made the Romans outdo Alexander in cruelty, and Eleazar's speech convinces the Jews to die. These alterations are significant because Josephus' version of the Masada story does not feature Alexander at all, though his laws for the Alexandrian Jews are noted elsewhere. The Christian author has deliberately superimposed one Josephan piece of

[37] Ps.-Hegesippus *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 2.9 (*CSEL* 66.149–50). For the same topos of Britain and Alexander see for example Arrian *History of Alexander* 7.1.4; Julian *Caesars* 312a.

[38] Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 14.114 incorporating Strabo of Amasia *BNJ* 91 F 7.

[39] Ps.-Hegesippus *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 5.53 (*CSEL* 66.412–13). Cf. Josephus *Jewish War* 7.304–401. See also the use of the story in a less polemical context in the early fifth-century *Church History* of by the Constantinopolitan layman Socrates, Socrates Scholasticus *Church History* 7.13. Cf. Cassiodorus' commission of the Latin translation of the *Church History* 11.11.9.

information onto another in his elaboration of the Masada story so as to fulfil his aim.

There are several other tales of interest in this text, some of which I have discussed elsewhere, but I want to turn to a story that is not in it. The absence of a story in a longer narrative is often as important as what that narrative includes. The Christian author does not mention Josephus' set piece on Alexander in the *Jewish Antiquities* – namely the fiction that the king entered Jerusalem and the Temple. We cannot know why he left it out; the contrast between Rome's sack of the city and Alexander's respect for it may work well. The Jerusalem visit became one of the most popular Alexander tales of early Christian historiography, and its use (or omission) reveals much about the Christian acceptance of the figure.

Early Christians and Alexander's Visit to Jerusalem

I first offer a short summary of Josephus' expansive account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem in book 11 of the *Jewish Antiquities*:

> Alexander's army was ravaging the cities of the Levantine coast when the High Priest of Jerusalem, Jaddus, refused his request by letter for friendship and reinforcements (§§ 317–20). In his rage at rejection, Alexander swiftly descended upon the frightened population of Jerusalem after his sack of Tyre and Gaza. At this crucial juncture, the Jewish God convinced the High Priest to lead the people outside to meet the king (326–8). The climactic encounter between king and High Priest does not disappoint in its grand reveal (329–39): Alexander genuflected before the divine name inscribed on a golden plate on the High Priest's cap in front of the assembled Jewish people and his perplexed army. He then declared that this god had said in a dream that he would support the campaign (334–5). The High Priest invited him into the temple and showed Alexander a prophecy from the book of Daniel – that is the prophecy to the effect that a Greek king would defeat a Persian ruler (Dan. 8:20–1, cf. 10:20) – which greatly increased the Macedonian hope for victory against the Achaemenid superpower (336–7). After conferring due honours upon the Jewish people, Alexander's army left Jerusalem to fight a battle against Darius III with a newly enrolled contingent of Jewish soldiers. This underscores the point that the king was bound for success as the divine instrument of the Jewish god and champion of His people. (338–40)

This elaborate fiction has been studied from almost every angle since the Enlightenment.[40] Scholarly interest has centred on whether the story is true, as well as on the question of Josephus' Hellenistic sources. It is only recently, however, that the episode has been fully commented on by the members of the Brill project led by Steve Mason. In the appendix of the project's commentary on book 11 of the *Jewish Antiquities*, Ory Amitay calls for studies of the 'extra-Josephan traditions', by which he refers to the later Hebrew material that bears upon the tale in all its aspects, including the extra episodes that supposedly took place while Alexander was in the city and the individuals he encountered while there.[41] Amitay's approach to the Jerusalem story's wider tradition dictates a shift in our scholarly focus. Instead of looking back to Josephus and his lost Hellenistic predecessors, we must turn towards the late antique Christian versions that have not been fully appreciated in scholarship, despite the fact that the texts are so important for medieval European literature and art.[42]

Origen offers the earliest surviving witness to the story in early Christian texts in his *Against Celsus* (5.50). Immediately before the reference in question, Celsus rejects the notions that God had assisted the Jews in any way, that the Jews had unique experiences with angels and that they had exclusive access to a promised land. Origen disagrees, arguing non-Jews had assuredly referred to God as 'God of the Hebrews' (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων τῆς ἡμετέρας πίστεως Ἑβραίων καλεῖσθαι θεόν). To offer 'historical' evidence of God's support for the Hebrews, he deploys a heavily demarcated version of the Jerusalem tale:

> And because they [i.e. the Hebrews] were in favour with God – as long as they were not forsaken [i.e. before the coming of Jesus Christ] – they continued to be protected by divine power, even though they were few in number. Not even in the days of Alexander of Macedon did they suffer anything at his hands, despite the fact that they would not take up arms against Darius because of certain agreements and oaths. They also say that the High Priest clothed himself in his sacerdotal vestment at that time, and that Alexander bowed before him, saying that he had seen a man in this very dress, who proclaimed to him in a dream vision that he would bring the whole of Asia under his rule.[43]

[40] Briant 2015, 61–7. [41] Amitay 2017.

[42] For a review of the Byzantine versions of the episode see now Jouanno 2016. Cary 1954 devotes a few pages to the episode. See Kress 2014 for the related imagery.

[43] Origen *Against Celsus* 5.50. Trans. Chadwick 1965, 303–4 (adapted).

This adaptation retains the following features found in the Josephan narrative: that the Jews would not assist Alexander because of the oath to Darius, the genuflection before the high priest and the dream vision of victory related to the king by a divine(ly dressed) figure. Origen employs the historicising *phasi* (plural) to support this latter claim, which might have otherwise seemed questionable. Given the use of the plural, Origen does not commit explicitly to Josephus as a source, even if the three borrowed features are strikingly Josephan.

Other details are omitted, however. Origen removes details of primarily Jewish interest. For example, he does not mention the important privileges Alexander bestows upon the Jews that Josephus stresses, the prophecies of Daniel or, crucially, the king's entry into the Temple. This version thus gives a completely different impression to Josephus'. Origen discards Alexander's connection to the Jews and their willingness to support him. His agenda is perhaps not surprising. He focusses on what God did to protect the Jews, and the exemplary story confers authority upon that notion by appealing to the figure of Alexander, again for the sake of recognisability. He claims it was God's doing that kept the powerful king at bay. For Origen, the story is sufficient proof that God had protected the Jews, which is important for countering Celsus' argument that God had *not*. Again we note selective omission was an essential tool the Christians exploited in their adaptation of material to make it suitable for Christian argument.

In the same passage Origen goes further by adding an argument about the Romans and Christians. He claims God's favour had switched to the Christians with the advent of Jesus Christ, and he uses as proof of this argument the fact that the Romans had not been able to eradicate the Christians. His argument is a powerful chiasmus: because of God's favour, Alexander could not defeat the Jews, but they won him over, and similarly too the Romans could not halt the Christian faith of Origen's day. Indeed, he may even have hinted that the Romans would be won over by the Christians. His use of the story on behalf of Christianity ties well into the other Alexander exempla (Greek *paradeigmata*) explored in the preceding pages. In Christian texts they were not stagnant stories of a bygone age, but rather performed a dynamic role in accommodating the Christian cause in the later Roman empire.

Origen is far from the only Christian to find the Jerusalem tale useful for Christian argument. In a monumental study of the whole of Alexander literature Alexander Demandt has argued the tale became canonised in early Christianity, although it is in practice difficult to speak of a 'canon'.[44]

[44] Demandt 2009, 189.

Indeed, tracing the diffusion of the story into Christian texts is problematic. The same author might even choose to put it in or leave it out. For example, Eusebius mentions the story in two different historiographical works, *Demonstration of the Gospel* (*c*.311) and his *Chronological Tables* (revised version *c*.325), but, importantly, he omits it from his critical review of Alexander in the *Life of Constantine* (1.7–8).[45] The story was only employed if it fitted Eusebius' immediate historiographical agenda; in the former two works, he was trying to demonstrate the providence of God in human history, whereas in the latter he attempted to praise Constantine by denigrating past rulers. If we consider later Byzantine chroniclers, the list of examples of the story's inclusion or omission can be multiplied many times.

We can witness this pattern of eclecticism in the Latin West as well. The story seems first to have diffused to the Latin West through Jerome's adaptation of Eusebius' *Chronological Tables* (*c*.380). It is accepted in the work on 'sacred' history by Sulpicius Severus (*c*.403), but not in *Course of Time* (*c*.397) by Quintus Julius Hilarianus.[46] It is known to Augustine and used in his exposition of world history in book 18 of *City of God*, although he is the only Christian to dismiss Alexander's reverence for the Jewish god in the Temple.[47] His contemporary, the polemical historian Orosius, did not use the Jerusalem story in his massive *History against the Pagans* because he represents Alexander as a warmongering madman from start to finish.[48] The historiographical purpose of a given Christian work is therefore an essential criterion for the incorporation or exclusion of the Jerusalem tale. I note that, despite the influence of Augustine's thought and Orosius' historiography, the story of Alexander in Jerusalem was extensively used as a positive evaluation of the king, if not mainly apologetic in its aim, in the Latin West, and was strongly diffused into the literature of the Middle Ages by means of both the works of Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede, whose work was based in part on Jerome's labours.[49]

[45] *Demonstration of the Gospel* 8.2.67; *Chronological Tables* (*GCS* 20.197 for the Armenian; 47.123 for the Greek/Latin). For the text see now Burgess and Kulikowski 2013, 119–26.

[46] Sulpicius Severus *Sacred History* 2.17 (*SC* 441.267–8). Cf. Hilarianus *Course of Time* p. 168–9 Frick.

[47] Augustine *City of God* 18.45.

[48] Orosius' main narrative on Alexander occurs in book 3 of his *History*. For his other remarks on Alexander see 1.2.4–6, 1.2.9, 1.4.5, 1.16.2, 4.13, 4.6.21, 5.22.3, 6.21.19–20, 7.2.5, 7.34.5, 7.42.13.

[49] Isidore of Seville *Major Chronicle* §§ 193–5; Bede *On the Reckoning of Time* p. 488. Cf. Bede *Commentary on Nehemiah* 12:10–11 (*CCSL* 119d.342).

Christians and Christians

So far, we have explored how Christians made previously existing Alexander stories relevant for Christian argument by recalibration, rearrangement of material and selective omission. In most cases this creative reworking did not lead to the development of a completely new Alexander figure, but the framework within which his history was inserted changed. Whether Christians associated him with a cast of classical or Jewish characters or places, they were keen to make connections in the past that were relevant for the situation of the Christian present. Their willingness to make a blend of material is perhaps not too surprising, given the fact that Christians in general took pains to situate their religion within the context of contemporary culture. Moreover, ancient historical writers generally sought to engage with all the material available to them as part of the creative process of creating an authoritative work supported by arguments. The arguments the Christians made did take the discourse of Alexander in new directions, as did the ways in which they combined and prioritised their material.

It is difficult to detect distinct developments over time in the early Christian engagement with Alexander because the great majority of the relevant texts derive from the period after Constantine I (r. 306–37). Indeed, more Greek and Latin literature survives from the fourth century than all previous periods put together. There were, however, many continuities in Alexander-related themes between the second and third centuries on the one hand and the fourth on the other. For example, explicit comparisons between Alexander and figures important for the Church (Jewish heroes, Jesus, Apostles) were common and in the fourth century it also became common to compare him to emperors and bishops. These were of course comparisons Alexander could never win, although he was sometimes a model to imitate. In one isolated instance he bests Julian, as Rowland Smith has shown – but this comparison is irregular because it was made by Christians, who sought to claim Julian was far from a new Alexander in the light of the emperor's ill-fated campaign to the East.[50]

One of the most striking comparisons of Alexander with Christian material is made by John Chrysostom in his second homily on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.[51] The fourth-century preacher argues that the

[50] Smith 2011.

[51] John Chrysostom *Second Homily on 1 Thessalonians* 1.8–10 (*PG* 62.399). 1 Thessalonians 1.9: 'For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in

Gospel, unlike the local praises of virtuous men, had been spread to the furthest corners of the earth and its message had been understood equally well everywhere it went. To demonstrate that the Apostle's (and his own) words were not empty boasts, he adduced the fame of Macedon under Alexander as a point of comparison. The wide diffusion of the renown of Alexander licenced John Chrysostom to argue the Gospel could also spread far and wide, as it indeed had done by the late fourth century. He used the fact that the memory of Alexander was strong both in the past and in the Byzantine present to illustrate the way in which the Gospel had had the same impact on ancient memory. This is the single most striking religious argument: the Gospel was made analogous to the greatness of Alexander. If the Macedonian king could be used to corroborate the religious mission of what had originally been a small sectarian movement, he could clearly be deployed in every type of argument on behalf of Christianity.

John Chrysostom's remark suggests a positive engagement with Alexander in Byzantium.[52] The Byzantine Christians were certainly labouring to appropriate Alexander, and we know of several texts that turn Alexander into a Byzantine conqueror by making him launch his campaign against Persia from Byzantium rather than from Macedon.[53] There is the oft-discussed legend of Alexander's gate or wall that protected civilisation against the apocalyptic hordes of Gog and Magog, a story with immense importance for Alexander's afterlife in both the East and West. The story has Syriac origins in the seventh century.[54] We also know the Christians redacted the *Alexander Romance*, which spread across the linguistically diverse Byzantine empire, and brought the Alexander figure into Armenian, Syrian and eventually Arabic literature. This image of Alexander, the ideal emperor of the imperial East, is the one we find in his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.

This concept of Alexander as an ideal Byzantine king is too simplistic, at least if we consider the Christian context. A remark in Chrysostom's *Instruction to the Catechumens* is suggestive. A catechumen was wearing an Alexander coin as an amulet for luck. Chrysostom chastised him for this, saying the symbols of Christians and pagans should not mix. So, for religious purposes, Chrysostom envisaged a clear separation, although

every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it.'

52 See now Moenning 2016 for a lucid study of the Byzantine Alexander tradition.

53 See for example John Malalas *Chronography* 8.1.

54 For an overview of the mostly Syriac source texts see Reinink 2003.

Alexander could certainly be used to advance the Christian cause politically. Yet Chrysostom's verdict on Alexander is more ambiguous than positive: in his detailed comparison of Alexander, Jesus and his saints, he says no one celebrated Alexander at his tomb, but Christians celebrated the resurrected saints with festivals.[55] While scholars take this passage to refer to the disappearance and/or the mysterious location of Alexander's tomb in Alexandria, we should focus on the emphasis on Alexander's death. Chrysostom wants to bring attention to the powerful king's humbling demise and the absence of a proper place for pagan cult ritual, suggesting the Christians outlived the pagan hero. These passages in the works of John Chrysostum suggest the possibilities of generating meaning through the Alexander figure.

The life and death of Alexander, as well as other famous people, became literary topos in comparisons with Christians. In the *Cure of Greek Maladies* (8.60–1), Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d. *c.*457) uses the same argument in a polemic. He argues nobody knows where the tombs of the famous world conquerors are: Xerxes, Darius and Alexander. Nobody celebrates them annually and, because such great kings are dead, they are only as mighty as any other dead person. These royal figures are then juxtaposed with the Christian martyrs whom Theodoret considers more worthy and virtuous than the Persians, Spartans, Macedonians and Romans of old. Correspondingly, in the Latin *Life of Columbanus* by Jonas of Bobbio (d. after 659), this author too compares past and present.[56] Structuring his argument in relation to the metals of the statue in Daniel 2 (gold: Babylon; silver: Media; bronze: Persian; iron: Macedon), he asserts that the soldiers of Christ were more powerful than any empire of the past and claims not even Homer or Vergil would be able to praise the Christian saints properly. He then catalogues powerful individuals who, he claims, could not have joined the feast of the Christian monks: Hannibal, Porus, Scipio Africanus and Julius Caesar. Porus, the Indian king who fought Alexander at the Hydaspes river in 326 BC, is clearly the odd man out; Alexander was normally paired with Hannibal or Scipio, as well as Caesar, for example by Julian.[57]

We notice once more that these are comparisons that no pagan of the classical tradition could win, but the fact remains that the creative use of certain 'classical' figures, such as Alexander, made the past relevant to a new Christian order and life of the mind.

[55] John Chrysostom *Homily* 26 on 2 Corinthians (*PG* 61.580–1).

[56] Jonas of Bobbio *Life of Columbanus* (*MGH SS M* 37 p. 225 Krusch) with the new translation of O'Hara and Wood 2017.

[57] On Porus in Christian texts see for example Claudian of Alexandria *Stilicho's Consulship* 1.267 (Hall no. 21); *Fourth Consulship of Honorius* 374–7 (Hall no. 8).

Alexander for All

For Christians in the Greek East and the Latin West there seems to have been no set interpretation of Alexander, if we think of their remarks solely in terms of positive and negative value judgements. But this would be true for non-Christians too, who deployed Alexander ambiguously in their narratives for many different purposes, sometimes *against* Christian contentions. As a popular figure Alexander clearly appealed to both ends of the religious spectrum and featured in 'everyone's past'.[58] What was much more important than passing judgement was the flexible utility of the stories surrounding the figure, such as the Jerusalem tale, which served as a sort of apologetic exemplum in Christian histories. In exemplum literature, Alexander was often not the most important person in the tales in which he featured, such as in Ambrose's reading of Philo's Calanus. There is obviously much more to be done on the full-length Alexander texts of the later Roman and Byzantine empires, as well as the linguistically diverse Alexander histories of the late antique world.

I return briefly to Bowersock's point about the documentation of Alexander being 'less good' than that of Julian. This assumption is misleading in my view. It is not true that the documentation is less good: we have abundant evidence for Alexander, including inscriptions and material culture. It is rather that many intellectual groups in the ancient world appropriated Alexander to promote their own cause, which contributed to the constant reinterpretation of the figure throughout antiquity. Julian clearly saw Alexander as part of the classical tradition that he himself continued; early Christians thought differently and laboured to make him part of their textual tradition with the means available to them.

Despite the exposition of the previous pages, it remains difficult to determine exactly what set the Christians apart from their pagan intellectual peers. Perhaps it is noteworthy that the figure of Alexander was part of the texts that the Christians considered of central importance, notably Old Testament Scripture; by repeatedly subjecting this text to interpretation, they wrote him into the intellectual landscapes of their own literature. They had other priorities and made alternative interpretations of texts that differed from those the non-Christians preferred. For example, they made choices of material that no 'pagan' touched – no classicising source but Josephus mentions the Jerusalem tale. Yet for

[58] *Pace* Momigliano 1963: 89, who argued Alexander was only a pagan exemplar in whom Christians had no interest.

many Christians that story, with new Christian emphases and omissions, became a staple in historiography from Origen onwards. This creative and polemical reading of Josephus' tales, and of many other authors and texts, is at the heart of the Christian constructions of the past for which Alexander was crucial. New pasts could be made when specific facts of history were deliberately misunderstood, rearranged or reinterpreted. Just like everybody else, Christian writers were selective and insistent. They had to demonstrate they had equal right to the authority of antiquity, while asserting the only true version of that past, often recorded by other peoples, was a variant of their own. In that Christian variant Alexander mattered greatly.

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6 Alexander in Ancient Jewish Literature

ORY AMITAY

No land visited by Alexander the Great could avoid telling his story in one way or another. The reason for this is straightforward and twofold. One, Alexander changed fundamentally the situation on the ground practically everywhere he conquered. Two, his was simply too good a story to pass over in silence. Ancient Jewish storytellers were no exception in that respect. They are special, however, in that their culture is among the few whose literary corpus concerning Alexander has survived to our time in significant volume. The purpose of this chapter is to go over the major Alexander stories and references in antique Jewish literature, observe some of their interconnections and provide a gateway for future readers in the field.[1]

The earliest surviving Jewish text referring to Alexander the Great, and also the most prestigious, is the book of Daniel. Unlike some Babylonian, Median and Persian monarchs, who appear in the book in person, Alexander is never mentioned in Daniel by name. This is probably due to the fact that from the narrative standpoint the Macedonian kingdom in general and Alexander in particular belong in a prophetic or visionary future and must therefore retain an air of mystery. Nevertheless, two references to Alexander are unmistakable.

The first clear reference comes in chapter 8, in a vision which appears to Daniel at the fortress of Susa in the third year of king Belshazzar. This vision takes the form of an animal allegory. At first Daniel sees a two-horned ram butting and dominating all other animals. Suddenly a single-horned he-goat comes charging from the west, running so fast its feet barely touch the ground. Noticing the ram, the he-goat charges directly at it with furious anger, casts it to the ground and tramples over it. The confrontation is finished almost before it has begun. The he-goat then grows great in size, but eventually his great horn breaks down, while four horns take its place and spread to the four winds of the earth (8:1–8). Later

[1] For earlier surveys of Alexander in Jewish literature of antiquity and the Middle Ages see Lévi 1883; Marcus 1937, 512–32; Kazis 1962, 2–39; Van Bekkum 1986; Stoneman 1994; Yassif 2006; Dönitz 2011. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

in the same chapter the angel Gabriel appears before Daniel and interprets the strange scene:

> The ram, which you have seen, the one with the horns, is the kings of Media and Persia. And the hairy he-goat is the king of Greece (Yavan); and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. And as for the broken (horn), four shall stand in its stead; four kingdoms from that nation, but not of the same might. (8:20–2)

The unmistakable explanation of Gabriel's interpretation is that the he-goat stands for the Hellenistic kingdom and the single horn depicts Alexander himself. Alexander's glorious campaign is represented by the he-goat's charge against the Persian ram.

A second clear Danielic reference to Alexander comes in chapter 11, in a separate vision dated to year one of the mysterious figure Darius the Mede:

> Three more kings stand to rule Persia, and the fourth will become the richest of all the rich, and in his power and riches all this shall awaken the kingdom of Greece (Yavan). And a Hero-king (*gibbor*) shall rise, and rule a great rule, and do as he pleases. And as he stands his kingdom shall break and be divided to the four winds of the earth; and (it shall not be handed down) to his progeny, and not to the same extent as the realm that he ruled, and (it shall be inherited by) others besides. (11:2–4)

Once again the reference to the end of Persian rule and the beginning of Greek rule puts the historical context behind Daniel's vision beyond doubt. The hero-king cannot be anyone but Alexander, whose kingdom had indeed been wrenched from his direct heirs and divided into a number of kingdoms covering roughly – but not exactly – the same area.

A number of important issues arise in these two short comments on Alexander. The first concerns the most obvious impact of Alexander's historical *res gestae* not only on Jewish literature, but on Jewish history in general. From Asia Minor and Egypt to easternmost Iran, the advent of Alexander brought about a new age. This dramatic change in world politics is manifest in these two visions, as well as in three other visions featured in the book of Daniel. The first of these is the famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar (2:31–45), where a multi-metallic statue symbolises the transferral of world rule from the Babylonians to the Medes, and thence to the Persians and to the Macedonians.[2]

[2] This is clearly meant by the statue's legs of iron and clay (Collins and Collins 1993, 166–70; Newsom 2014, 80–97; both with much detail on the sequence-of-empires motif in ancient literature and of its later reception). Josephus had already identified the iron with Rome (*Antiquities* 2.209–10; cf. Jerome on Daniel 2:40). See also 4 Ezra 12:10.

The second is narrated in chapter 7, in the vision of the four dreadful beasts rising from the sea, whose imagery and rhetoric inspired so much of John's Apocalypse. As in the vision of the statue, the sequence of the beasts represents the sequence Babylonia – Media – Persia – Greece.[3] The same historical scheme appears also in a third vision, ascribed to the third year of king Cyrus, where one of the supernatural beings appearing before Daniel tells him: 'Know you why I have come to you? Now shall I go back and fight with the prince of Persia; I depart and here comes the prince of Greece' (10:20).[4]

The point made by these indirect yet clear references to Alexander is that his global achievements did indeed change the world, opening a new era in history – hardly a surprising conclusion. A more subtle point is made by locating Alexander and his actions within a divinely governed ecumenical system focussed on the God of Israel and his host of angels and ministers.[5] The effect of this literary choice is double. First, the glory of Alexander's achievements is wrested away from him and transferred to the God of Israel. After all, everything Alexander did had long been a part of God's plan and therefore could be divulged to the Jewish visionary centuries before the actual events. As we shall see presently, God's prescience of and responsibility for Alexander's successes would become an essential part of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition. Second, by including Alexander in God's plan the author(s) of Daniel not only subject him to the biblical world order, but also removes from the story Alexander's own religious and mythological world. Alexander and his men may have thought they were aided in their endeavours by Zeus, Athena or Heracles, but in fact they were unwitting servants of God.

However, according to at least one of the visions in Daniel – Nebuchadnezzar's dream – Alexander's advent not merely ushered in a new period in history, but also brought about the penultimate period, to be followed by the eternal kingdom set up by the Lord of Heaven for his chosen people. In other words, according to Daniel's perception of world history, the Hellenistic age is to be followed by the messianic kingdom and the end of history.[6] This notion, which in Daniel is associated with

3 Collins and Collins 1993, 196–9; Newsom 2014, 224–6.

4 שׂר; 'prince' in KJV and NRSV. For the notion that each nation belongs to a particular divinity, that all such national divinities are the sons of God and that God himself is in charge of Israel, see Deuteronomy 32:8–9 with the LXX translation and the telling reading of the fragment from Qumran Cave 4 (=4QDeut[j]); with Collins and Collins 1993, 374–5, and Newsom 2014, 332.

5 For God as the decisive agent in the vicissitudes of human history see also Daniel 2:21, 4:14, 5:26–8.

6 2:35, 44–5. The rock which smashes the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is commonly interpreted as the Messiah (e.g. Rashi and Ibn-Ezra on 2:44). Jerome (*Commentary on Daniel*

Alexander only through his role as the founder of Hellenistic kingship, is picked up in various ways and contexts by a number of ancient Jewish texts, which point to him as the herald of the penultimate epoch.[7]

The first of these is *Seder Olam*, ascribed to the rabbinic sage R. Yosi ben-Ḥalafta (late second and early third centuries AD).[8] The author of *Seder Olam* attempts to compose a unified chronology from the creation of the world down to the Bar-Kochba rebellion, based for the most part on information gleaned from the Bible. This work is cited widely in later rabbinic literature, and serves as an important source for the Jewish dating system still in current use. The relevant section is chapter 30, the last in this short treatise:

> 'And the hairy goat is the king of Greece', etc. is the first king; 'and a Hero-king (*gibbor*) shall rise', 'and as he stands his kingdom shall break', – he is Alexander the Macedon, who ruled for 12 years. Until that time the prophets had prophesied in the holy spirit. From that time on 'turn your ear and listen to the words of the sages', as it is said 'for it is pleasant to keep them in your heart . . . to put your trust in Yhwh'.[9]

Two points are immediately observable. First, the author of *Seder Olam* uses as proof texts the two aforementioned Danielic references. By so doing the author engages the wider context of Daniel. Second, Alexander is synchronised with the end of prophecy. It should be stated outright that this synchronisation is both retrospective and ahistorical. There was certainly plenty of activity in the Jewish world after Alexander that could be and was perceived as prophetic. The important point for our discussion is that a competing perception saw the age following the biblical prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as devoid of true prophecy. In the words of *Seder Olam*, this was an era not of prophets but of sages. True prophecy will only be renewed with the return of Elijah, announcing the Day of the Lord and the beginning of the messianic age.[10] Alexander's role as the signifier of a time devoid of (true) prophecy displays him as standing at the starting point of the last period in pre-messianic times.

2:40) remarks the rock was none other than the Lord and Saviour Jesus, and the Jews and Porphyry understand it as a *future* messianic figure.

[7] On this role of Alexander see in more detail Amitay 2010, 104–22, which covers the references in *Seder Olam*, the Midrash of Ten Kings, and Alexander's relation to Gog and Magog.

[8] The definitive edition and commentary of *Seder Olam* is Milikowsky 2013.

[9] In addition to the quotations from Daniel, the last two biblical quotations come from Proverbs 22:17–19. 'In your heart' is translated after the LXX; in the MT: 'in your stomach'.

[10] Malachi 3:23. For the lack of true prophecy as a religious and political marker see also I Maccabees 4:46, 14:41; *Megillat Taanit* on 23rd Marḥeshvan (Parma Ms. = Noam 2003, 95–6, 239–42); *Mishnah Avot* 1.1.

A very different, much clearer statement of Alexander's position at the outset of the last era in history before the advent of the Messiah comes in a list of ten kings, spanning all of history from creation to the eventual kingdom of God, who are said to have ruled the world from one end to the other. Five variants of this list have been preserved in five different texts, deriving from latest antiquity through the Middle Ages.[11] The original composition of the list, represented in *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer* (PRE) and in Ms. De-Rossi 327, is as follows:[12]

1. God	6. Nebuchadnezzar
2. Nimrod	7. Cyrus
3. Joseph	8. Alexander
4. Solomon	9. King Messiah
5. Ahab	10. God

A full discussion of this fascinating list lies well beyond our scope here. Three essential points nevertheless bear mention. The first point is the immediately apparent observation that here too Alexander's reign is envisioned as initiating the final era preceding the messianic kingdom, a position consistent with what we have seen so far.[13] The second point is that, as in *Seder Olam*, the midrash in PRE uses the by now familiar proof texts from Daniel (8:5, 11:4). Additionally, one of the two proof texts used for the Messiah is Daniel 2:35, referring to the rock that crushes the multimetallic statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. These proof texts, as well as Nebuchadnezzar's inclusion in the list and his own proof text from Daniel 2:38, thus locate the midrash's concept of history in a clear Danielic context.

The third point concerns the relevance and significance of Cyrus as the immediate precursor of Alexander on the list. The sense of continuity from Cyrus to Alexander is natural enough. To begin with, Cyrus was the founder of the great Persian empire which Alexander had defeated and

11 *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer* chapter 10 or 11 (depending on the manuscript); *Targum Sheni* to the Scroll of Esther 1:1; *Bereshit Rabati* in Raymondus Martini, *Pugio Fidei* 2.10.5; *Aqtan deMar Yaakov* (ed. Carmoli 1885); Ms. De-Rossi 327 (ed. Hurwitz 1881, 16–33, 38–55). For a basic introduction to the appearances of this list in midrashic literature see Amitay 2010, 114–20.

12 On PRE deriving from Eretz-Israel in the early Islamic period see Strack and Stemberger 1991, 328–30; Barth 1999; Stein 2004.

13 In the other versions of the list Alexander loses this position to a representative of Rome, inserted between his time and that of the Messiah and of God. This phenomenon is equivalent to the reinterpretation of the fourth beast in Daniel, from Macedon to Rome, and stands at the heart of the observation that the list, as given here, is the earliest, most original version.

inherited. In a sense, Alexander can even be viewed not only as the originator of the Hellenistic world, but also as the last king of Persia.[14] There is even good reason to think Alexander himself perceived of such a connection: he respected and rewarded a Central Asian nation that had once saved Cyrus' army from destruction, considered sparing a city founded by Cyrus in Sogdiana despite the fact that it had revolted against him, followed in the footsteps of Cyrus into the terrible Gedrosian desert, and severely punished the guards who had allowed Cyrus' grave to be plundered.[15]

This notion of connection and continuity is evident, understandably in different ways, in Jewish perceptions of Alexander. We return to examine these in the discussion of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' story cycle. For now, let us note the following. As we have seen explicitly in Daniel and implicitly in the midrash of Ten Kings, the identity of the world ruler is always dictated by God. When one dominion gives way to another in war, the victory is gained through God and his minions or ministers. According to the prophet (deutro-) Isaiah, the same is true for Cyrus, who receives a personal promise from God to take him by the hand, 'to subject nations to him and break the loins of kings, to open doors before him and keep gates open . . . to break brazen doors and cut through iron bars' (45:1–2). Two important issues are raised in the wider context of this prophecy: (a) it is closely connected with Cyrus' permission to rebuild the city and the temple of Jerusalem, formerly destroyed by the order of Nebuchadnezzar (44:28); (b) Cyrus is apparently ignorant of the accurate name or identity of God (45:4–5).[16] In these two respects Alexander takes over from Cyrus as a defender of the temple, and transcends the Persian king in forming a personal attachment to the God of Israel.

A final manifestation of Alexander's special role in history comes from a very different context. In the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, a Christian Syriac text composed in all likelihood in AD 692, as well as in the epsilon recension of the Greek *Alexander Romance*, composed probably sometime in the following century, Alexander is said to have built a wall and a gate in the far north in order to defend civilised humanity from the barbarian

[14] See most notably the masterful survey of the Persian empire by Briant (1996).

[15] The so-called Benefactors: Diodorus 17.81.1–2; Curtius 7.3.1–3; Arrian 3.27.4–5. City of Cyropolis: Curtius 7.6.20. Desert: 6.24.1–3. Cyrus' tomb: Arrian 6.29.4–11. For the reception of this notion see Amitay 2010, 118.

[16] In 44:28–45:1 Cyrus is called by God (through the prophet) 'shepherd' and 'Messiah'. In a wider context I suggest this sequence of kings corroborates my claim that Alexander can be seen as a significant contributor to the advent and ascendance of Jesus Christ (Amitay 2010, 104–50).

nations lying in the Wilderland beyond.[17] At the head of these nations stand none other than Gog and Magog. The context is clear enough. According to the famous prophecy of Ezekiel (chapters 37–9), the final redemption of Israel will follow a devastating attack from the north led by Gog, king of Magog. This notion is picked up and developed in the Revelation of John (chapter 20), where 'Gog king of Magog' already appears as 'Gog and Magog', and the battle against them is depicted as the final confrontation between good and evil, following the thousand-year reign of Christ and preceding the final judgement and the second resurrection. The message is clear: Alexander had built the wall that would hold back Gog and Magog and that will be breached only at the end of time. Once again, therefore, Alexander instigates the penultimate epoch in history.[18]

A different result of the subordination of Alexander to the divine plan is a potential neutralisation of any discussion or judgement of his motives and actions. After all, Alexander merely played his part in God's plan, and God's plan ought to be beyond reproach. Nevertheless, at least at one point in Daniel there seems to be a hint of a negative attitude to the conduct of the Macedonian conqueror. In 11:3 we read that the hero-king (i.e. Alexander) 'did as he pleased'. The same expression is used later in the chapter about two other Hellenistic kings, who are not mentioned by name, but are clearly Antiochos III 'the Great' and his son Antiochos IV Epiphanes (verses 16, 36 respectively). These three kings are thus grouped together as wilfully hubristic, and 'in each case, pride goes before a fall'.[19]

[17] Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methosdius: chapter 8; Syriac ed. Reinink 1993; Greek ed. Aerts and Kortekaas 1998; English trans. Garstad 2012; for the dating see Brock 1976, 34; Reinink 1992, 181–5. Epsilon *Romance*: chapter 39; ed. Trumpf 1974; for the dating see Jouanno 2002, 339. On Alexander's gates and God> and Magog the basic reference is still Anderson 1928 and 1932.

[18] Strictly speaking, this story does not belong in this chapter since the texts where it appears are clearly Christian in origin. There is good reason, however, to suspect that the story derives from Jewish origins. In Josephus' description of the Alani invasion of AD 73 (*War* 7.244–51) he describes their collaboration with the king of the Hyrkanians, who was 'the master of the approach that king Alexander had closed with iron gates'. These Alani were Scythians, dwelling about the river Tanais and Lake Maiotis. In *Antiquities* 1.123 Josephus identifies Gog and the Magogians as Scythians. Taking these two statements together, it may be said that the notion of Alexander building his gates in order to stop an invasion from the north by Gog and the Magogians was conceivable in late first-century AD Jewish circles, long before its explicit articulation by Pseudo-Methodius and the author of the epsilon *Romance*. See further in Amitay 2010, 104–8.

[19] Collins and Collins 1993, 380. According to Rappaport 1993, the attitude of Daniel to Alexander on the whole is rather negative.

A similar approach, which both views Alexander as the instigator of a new era and singles out his hubris and marks him as a precursor of Antiochos IV, is apparent also in 1 Maccabees (1:1–10; NRSV):

> After Alexander son of Philip, the Makedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him. After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth. From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochos Epiphanes, son of King Antiochos; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

The notion that Alexander began a new era by instigating a new world order is inherent in the fact that the author of 1 Maccabees chose him as a starting point for his text. This notion is corroborated by the author's cavalier treatment of a century and a half of Hellenistic history, proceeding directly from the division of Alexander's empire to Antiochos Epiphanes. This literary approach stands in contrast to that of Daniel 10–11, where we find a more detailed survey of subsequent events including a short résumé of the political and military affairs of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. It is much closer in spirit to Daniel 7:23–4, where the text moves swiftly from Alexander to a hubristic, riddle-solving king – presumably Antiochos Epiphanes.[20] In 1 Maccabees 1:3 Alexander's hubristic aspect is made explicit with the expression 'his heart was lifted up' (ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ), which parallels Daniel's 'he did as he pleased'. Here too Alexander's haughtiness is immediately followed by his unexpected downfall. However, in 1 Maccabees as in Daniel the negative attitude to Alexander appears to be based less on an appraisal of his personality and more on his historical role as founder of the Hellenistic world and antecedent of Antiochos Epiphanes.

[20] Collins and Collins 1993, 320–1; Newsom 2014, 240–2.

Alexander's hubris or vainglory is his defining quality also in the eyes of Philo of Alexandria (first century AD). In his treatise *That Every Good Man Is Free* he paints a picture of an exchange between Alexander and the virtuous Indian Gymnosophist Calanus.[21] Alexander, readily recognising great wisdom but hardly understanding it, suggests Calanus leave his native land and become a resident companion, so as to be admired for his wisdom in all of Asia and Europe. When persuasion fails, the king threatens with compulsion. Undaunted, Calanus replies: 'Of what worth shall I be, Alexander, when you present me to the Greeks, if indeed I am compelled to do what I do not wish to do?'[22] The story is not developed further, and the reader is left with a sense of Alexander's childish high-mindedness.

This theme is picked up and amplified in Philo's reference to Alexander in his exegesis on the name of Cain, firstborn of Adam and Eve (*On the Cherubim*, 53–66). In Philo's allegorical system Adam stands for 'the mind in us' (ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦς) or inner faculty of reason, whereas Eve is sense-perception (αἴσθησις) – that is perception of what is external to the individual. The result of their coupling – that is Cain – is a false and vainglorious perception (οἴησις), that everything in existence is the creation of the beholder. Therefore the Hebrew name Cain, which signifies ownership. To make this rather complex idea more easily understandable, Philo turns to Alexander:

> For they say that when he appeared to have gained control over Europe and Asia, he stood up in an opportune place, surveying everything around him, and said: 'the things on that side are mine, and the things on that side are mine'. And thus he displayed the essential levity of a childish, infantile, amateurish soul, hardly that of a king. (*De Cherubim* 63)

This appraisal of Alexander's character is certainly more acute than anything we have seen so far but is clearly in agreement with the notion of hubristic vainglory expressed in Daniel, in 1 Maccabees and in Philo's own *Every Good Man*.[23]

[21] Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 92–6.

[22] §95. According to Strabo (15.1.68; see also Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.2.4–3.1), there was a general agreement among the historians (Megasthenes alone is mentioned by name) that Calanus gladly accepted Alexander's offer. The Indian sage who refused it was Dandamis (alias Mandamis).

[23] According to Runia, Philo based his allegorical description of the world's creation in *De Opificio Mundi* on at least one description of Alexandria's foundation by Alexander. If his interpretation of the allegory is accepted, 'there can be no question that the king is a symbol of divine transcendence' (1989, 409). In other words, in this allegory Alexander stands for God! If that is so, it is all the more striking that in *De Cherubim* Philo chastises Alexander for haughtiness in thinking God's creation in fact belongs to him.

Much less clear, however, is the identity of those writers who are anonymously (φασιν) referred to by Philo as the sources for this anecdote. A hint may perhaps be gleaned from the expression 'an opportune location' (ἐν ἐπικαίρῳ χώρῳ). From a geographical standpoint such a statement would make best sense shortly before or after Alexander's crossing of the Hellespont, or possibly during his conquest of the Aegean shore of Asia Minor. Yet nothing of the sort is recorded in any of the surviving Alexander histories, and in any case it could hardly be said at that point that he had gained control of Asia. A possible alternative may be that Philo refers here to an early and now lost version of Alexander's ascent to the sky. In this famous story, a favourite of storytellers and artists from medieval times onward, Alexander was borne skywards in a vehicle tied to four hungry birds of prey, dangling appetising pieces of meat just beyond their reach. Reaching a great height, Alexander notices the spherical shape of the world and is admonished by a mysterious flying person to make do with his conquests on earth and not to aspire to the heavens. This story makes its first appearance in recension lambda (2.41) of the Greek *Romance*, only in the eighth century. However, a much earlier and more laconic version appears in the Palestinian Talmud, where it is ascribed to R. Yonah, an important Galilean sage active around the middle of the fourth century:[24]

> Alexander of Macedon, when he desired to ascend to heaven, was rising and rising, and he rose up until he saw the world as a ball and the sea as a bowl.[25]

In addition, the reference to Alexander in the PRE version of the midrash of Ten Kings, which we have already encountered, mentions that Alexander desired 'to know what lies at the ends of the Earth. Not only that, he wanted to ascend to the skies, to know what was in the skies, and to descend to the depths, to know what was in the depths'. This remark gives reason to think the author of this version of the midrash was familiar not only with the

[24] Interestingly, a story in the Palestinian Talmud *Berakhot* 5.1=9a brings R. Yona, together with his close friend R. Yose before the *magister equitum* of the East Ursicinus (ארסקינס in the Aramaic text). When the Roman magistrate sees the two rabbis, he rises before them out of respect. To his surprised men, who ask why he should rise before these Jews, he answers: 'the faces of these (men) I see in battle, and I win!' (אפיהון דהני אנא חזי בקרבא ונצח). This episode is usually connected with the mysterious Jewish revolt against the eastern Caesar Gallus in the early 350s (see Goodblatt 2006, 410–13, with further bibliography). As we shall see presently, this is the exact answer Alexander gives to his friends when he asked why he prostrated himself before Simon the Just. Thus it is the same R. Yona who is on the one hand cited as an authority on the legend of Alexander's flight and on the other attracts an Alexander reference into his own history.

[25] *Avodah Zarah* 3.1=42c; see also the parallel in *Bamidbar Rabah* 13.14.

story of Alexander's ascent to the skies, but also with the episode of his descent to the bottom of the sea in a diving bell (which also does not appear in the Greek tradition before the eighth century). It has recently been suggested that the rabbinic legend is somehow the source of the more developed version in the *Romance*, and that in itself it was inspired, in Egyptian and Alexandrian settings, by the *Aesop Romance* and by the *Tales of Ahiqar*.[26] If so, this reference by Philo may form another link in the chain of tradition. Be that as it may, in all the manifestations of the story, the prevalent lesson is that even the most glorious representatives of humanity should know their bounds and curb their hubristic tendencies.

Another story about Alexander, which may be loosely associated with the Danielic tradition, appears in Josephus' *Against Apion*, derived from a work by the so-called Pseudo-Hekataios, *On the Jews*:[27]

> When Alexander was on one occasion in Babylon and had decided to clear the temple of Bel which had collapsed, he ordered all his soldiers alike to transport the soil; only the Judeans did not comply, but endured severe beating and paid heavy fines, until the king pardoned them and granted them an amnesty.

This story is grounded in fact: Alexander did start major renovations on Bel's temple in Babylon, which engaged some 10,000 soldiers for two months with the necessary earthwork. Alexander himself died before he could see the project completed.[28] However, the part taken, or rather not taken, by Jewish soldiers is reported only by Josephus. It is impossible therefore to determine its factuality. The Danielic context of this story is apparent first in its geographical focus on Babylonia, where a number of the Danielic episodes take place. A second similarity is the resilient resistance by the Judean protagonists to any kind of foreign worship. In Daniel 3 it is the three friends – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – who refuse to prostrate themselves before the golden statue set up by Nebuchadnezzar. In the deuterocanonical *Bel and the Dragon* (1–23) it is Daniel himself who mocks Bel's worship and demolishes his statue and his temple. Since we

[26] For these episodes in the *Romance* see Stoneman 2008, 110–20, especially 112, 116, for the putative rabbinic sources of the two episodes.

[27] 1.192; translation according to Barclay 2007, 111–12. Note that Josephus seems to have believed his source was the actual Hekataios of Abdera, and many scholars have indeed subscribed to this opinion. If so, this story would not belong in this chapter since Hekataios cannot in any way count as a Jewish author. However, it seems to me much more likely that Josephus had been deceived by a pseudonymous work of an unknown Jewish author. For arguments in favour of this opinion and surveys of previous discussions see especially Bar-Kochva 1996; Barclay 2007, 338–40.

[28] Strabo 16.1.5; Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.17.1–4.

lack the details of Pseudo-Hekataios' original story, it is hard to appraise its literary purpose other than demonstrating Judean faith and Alexander's recognition thereof. It is nevertheless significant that as in the book of Daniel, but unlike in the literature arising from the period following the Antiochene persecution, ultimate martyrdom is avoided and the protagonists are saved from death.

A very different Jewish literary tradition, less prestigious than the biblical one but more engaging literarily and just as well known, tells of the meeting of Alexander with the Judeans during his campaign. The most familiar branch of the tradition, which both exerted the greatest amount of influence on later literary tradition (Jewish and non-Jewish) and received the lion's share of scholarly attention, appears in book 11 of Josephus' *Antiquities*.[29] Two other versions, one rather close to Josephus' and the other quite different, have survived in various rabbinic works; the fourth appears in the epsilon and gamma recensions of the *Alexander Romance*. Given the predominance of Josephus' version both in reception and in scholarship, it would be best to start off this section with a short résumé of his story.[30]

The first contact between Alexander and the Judeans took place, according to Josephus, in the aftermath of Alexander's victory over Darius at Issos. As the Macedonian king settled down to besiege the obstinate city of Tyre, he sent letters to the Judean high priest requiring him to send auxiliaries, to supply provisions for the army and to send whatever gifts (i.e. taxes) that had formerly been given to Darius. This change of allegiance, promised Alexander, would not be regretted. The high priest responded to Alexander's ambassadors that he must decline the offer as he had sworn an oath of loyalty to Darius, which he could not and would not repeal. On hearing the news Alexander became irate and made known his intent to deal harshly with the Judeans once he had taken care of more urgent business. With the Tyrian siege successfully concluded, and following the conquest of Gaza, Alexander marched on Jerusalem to make good on his promise. When the high priest heard of Alexander's advent, he turned in anguish to supplication and sacrifice, asking God to protect his nation. That night he received a vision in his sleep whereby God instructed

[29] For representative surveys of the scholarship see Schürer 1901 (1970): 1.180–1 n. 1; Marcus 1937: 6.512–13; Schürer 1973–86: I, 138 n. 1; Golan 1982: 29–30 n. 1; Gruen 1998: 189–98; Spilsbury and Seeman 2017, 106–27; Ben Shahar 2017. The three 'extra-Josephan' versions are discussed (with full translations) in Amitay 2017; the entire 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition is the subject of a book currently written by the present author.

[30] *Antiquities* 11.317–20, 325–39.

him to be of good cheer and to prepare for Alexander the grandest possible welcome. Much encouraged, the high priest proceeded to do as instructed. When Alexander came close to the city, the priests of Jerusalem, accompanied by a great multitude of the people and headed by the high priest in his finest official attire, all came out to greet him. To the utter surprise of everyone in Alexander's camp, the king came out alone before his army and prostrated himself before the name of God, borne on the high priest's mitre. The Judeans were overjoyed, the Macedonians and Syrians were agog, and only Parmenion – Alexander's second in command – dared to ask why the king so revered the Judean high priest. Alexander replied it was not the man who was the object of reverence, but rather the divinity whose priest he was. For he had appeared to Alexander in a dream while still in Macedon, promising to lead the army to victory over the Persians; until this day Alexander had not seen anyone in such dress. With the tension thus dispelled, Alexander joined the high priest in sacrifice in the temple and was shown the book of Daniel, where his ultimate victory had been prophesied.[31] In addition, Alexander promised the Judeans they could maintain their constitution, they would be exempt from taxation on the sabbatical year and a certain autonomy would be extended also to the Judeans of Babylon and Media. If any Judeans were interested in joining Alexander's army, he would be pleased to have them and would allow them to remain faithful to their paternal customs.

It is easy to see why Josephus' story has inspired very little faith, to put it mildly, among modern historians. On the whole, it seems safe to assert that as it stands, Josephus' story cannot be accepted as a reliable record of actual events (nor, for that matter, can any of the other branches of the tradition, discussed presently). However, before we continue discussing the stories themselves, some words are in order about what we can assume did in fact happen. First, the reality of the Macedonian conquest of the Levant necessitated some interaction between an agent of the occupying regime and the Judean government in Jerusalem. This interaction will have included, at the very least, security issues, taxation, the mechanisms of communication between the new overlord and the local leadership and the possible contribution of the local community to its new sovereign's military effort. Such dealings could have been carried out directly by Alexander and the Judean

[31] It is interesting to see even here the traces of the Danielic tradition, a sure sign of its immense influence on Jewish perceptions of Alexander. Naturally, since the book of Daniel in its present form contains clear references to events that had taken place more than a century and half after Alexander, it could not have been shown to Alexander as it now stands, even if an opportunity for such a display had arisen.

high priest, by authoritative officials of their respective administrations or possibly through a combination of both methods, with initial negotiations at a somewhat lower level followed by an official appearance of the Judean high priest before the Macedonian monarch. Therefore, if we trim off all of the literary excesses and flights of fancy in the story by Josephus (the double dream and the *proskynesis* would be the first to go), and perhaps downgrade the level of the participants, we would be left with a skeleton of a story that sounds much more historical.

This last point is important for our discussion because of a trend in scholarship, beginning already in the nineteenth century, which argues the story by Josephus (and the tradition in its entirety) was born out of an encounter with a different major historical character: Antiochos III 'the Great', Julius Caesar and Marcus Agrippa have all been suggested.[32] On the other hand it has also been suggested that the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition is a result of actual interaction of the Judean community with Alexander, however limited it may in fact have been.[33] The latter approach seems to me preferable, given the immense power of Alexander's *res gestae* as a source of literary inspiration. Judean storytellers will have started spinning their yarn – both orally and in writing – immediately after the event.[34] It seems to me inconceivable that they should remain silent on what happened when Alexander arrived and turned the world on its head, only to be reminded of these earth-shaking events several generations or even centuries later.

What did Josephus or his source(s) aim to achieve with this story? One possible reading of the story identifies a tendency to humble Alexander before the God of Israel. This understanding of the story is highly congruent with a major trait of the Danielic tradition, as we have seen, and can be interpreted as indicating the superiority of Judaism over paganism or over gentiles in general, and as exemplifying the superiority of church over

[32] Antiochos III was first suggested by Krochmal 1860, 20–1; lately and importantly by Goldstein 1993, 90–5. Agrippa was brought up by Willrich 1895, 9–10. Julius Caesar was suggested by Büchler 1898, 15–22; followed by Marcus 1937, 530–1 and Simon 1941/62, 129. See further in Ben Shahar, 2017, 140–1.

[33] Kasher 1975; Golan 1982; Ben Shahar 2017.

[34] The focus of modern research on Josephus' version and on the method of source criticism has led scholars to postulate the existence of a number of earlier texts, used by Josephus to create his own piece. The classic example for this approach is Büchler 1898. See also Cohen 1982–3, who uses a similar logic but reaches different conclusions. A preferable approach, in my opinion, is to recognise first the plurality of versions that circulated alongside one another (as we shall see) and second to give more room to the power and influence of oral tradition. This approach is articulated in regard to Josephus by Golan 1982, and in greater detail – taking into account also the rabbinic tradition on Simon the Just – by Ben Shahar 2017.

state.[35] On the other hand, the very same story can be seen as an amplification of Alexander's standing – after all, he is the active agent at the heart of the story, as well as the direct recipient of God's grace – aiming to confer dignity and pride on Jews and Judaism through their association with the illustrious king.[36] These two approaches, despite their seemingly different attitudes, are hardly mutually exclusive. Let us remember Josephus published his *Antiquities* a full generation after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by Titus, accompanied as it was by a dispersion of Judeans over the Mediterranean world. His version of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' story could thus aim at defining the place of Jews in the Roman empire as a way of restoring shattered Jewish self-confidence, as a method of re-establishing the notion of God's supremacy over worldly events and even possibly as a beacon of hope for a change of fate.[37] Rather than choose a single interpretation, we should probably assume a multivalent message directed at a variegated audience.

As any reader familiar with Josephus' Alexander story will have observed, I have so far completely ignored an important aspect pertaining to the Samaritan involvement therein. To be brief, the Samaritan leader Sanballat, who, after failing in his initial effort to connect himself to the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem by marrying his daughter to the brother of the Judean high priest, lured his son-in-law to Samaria by promising to build for him a temple on Mt Gerizim, where he himself would be the high priest. This turn of events coincides with Alexander's arrival on the scene, which Sanballat used adroitly in order to obtain royal approval for his new temple. With Alexander's approval he initiates a building project, but passes away shortly thereafter. Following Alexander's visit to Jerusalem we hear of some Samaritans who fail to obtain the privileges awarded to the Judeans, but their temple retains its approval and remains as the symbol of the now irreparable schism between the two communities.

The question of the relation between the Sanballat story and Alexander's visit to Jerusalem is fraught with difficulties and has long been the topic of heated debate. Luckily, it lies well outside our discussion here.[38] What does matter, however, is that the name of Alexander became attached in the

[35] For vivid examples see the beautiful medallion created by Alessandro Cesati on the order of Pope Paul III in the mid-sixteenth century (Dahmen 2007, plate 29.1) and the acerbic words of Willrich (1895, 1). I testify to the currency of both interpretations in political discourse in present-day Europe and Israel.

[36] Gruen 1998, 194–202. [37] Mason 1994.

[38] For the history of scholarship and a thorough discussion see Schwartz 1990. For an extensive survey from the Samaritan standpoint see Pummer 2009, 105–52; for the most up-to-date bibliography see Spilsbury and Seeman 2016, 107 (n. 1009), 118.

minds of Jewish storytellers with Samaritan affairs.[39] This is clearly manifest in the story by Josephus (in fact, this point is all the more acute if we assume the historical Sanballat has nothing to do with Alexander). It is even clearer in the closely related rabbinic telling:[40]

> On the twenty-first of that (month) the Day of Mt. Gerizim. A day when the Kutim asked Alexander Macedon for the temple and he gave it to them. Came Israel and informed Simon the Just, (who) donned (the) priestly clothes. And he went out before him, he and all the magnates of Jerusalem, and while walking in the mountains they saw the light of torches. Said the king: 'What is this?' Told him the *delatores*[41]: 'These, these are the Judeans who rebelled against you.' He arrived at Antipatris (and) the sun came up. He saw Simon the Just, who was wearing his priestly clothes, fell from his chariot and prostrated himself on the ground before him. They told him: 'Before this (man) do you prostrate yourself!? But he is nothing but a son of man.' He told them: 'In this (man's) image I see when I go to war and gain victory.' He told him: 'What do you request?' He told him: 'The house where we pray for your kingdom, these gentiles misled you and you gave it to them.' He told them: 'Who has misled me?' They told him: 'These, these, Kutim.' He told him: 'They are hereby given to you.' He pierced their ankles, and they hung them from behind the horses, and dragged them over the thorns and the briars all the way to Mt. Gerizim. Since they arrived there, at Mt. Gerizim, they plowed it and sowed it, just as they had thought to do to the temple. The day when they did so they made into a good day.

It is easy to see that this version of the story shares close similarities with that of Josephus. Beside the involvement of the Samaritans and the importance of their temple, both stories have Alexander meet the high priest and bow down before him, and in both stories this action is met with surprise and explained by Alexander's recognition of God as responsible for his victories. There are also some clear dissimilarities: the high priest is not Jaddus, as in Josephus, but rather Simon the Just.[42] The meeting takes place

[39] Ben Shahar 2017, 135.

[40] This telling appears in all three manuscripts of *Megillat Taanit* on 21st Kislev (Noam 2003, 100–3, 262–5; Rosenthal 2008, 363), as well as in the Babylonian Talmud (*Yoma* 69a). In all four cases the story appears as an explanation of the 'Day of Mt Gerizim', a celebration of the Samaritan temple's destruction by John Hyrkanos I in the late second century BC. The translation here is made according to the version of Ms. Parma Palatine De-Rossi 117, and appears, together with the parallels and discussion, in Amitay 2016. See also Schwartz 1990, 187–9; Goldstein 1993, 64–6, 73–4, 96–8; Tropper 2013, 137–54; Ben Shahar forthcoming.

[41] Thus in the original: דלטורין – that is informers.

[42] As noted by Schwartz (1990, 187–8), the name of Jaddus in Josephus' story appears only in relation to the Samaritan tale, whereas in relation to Alexander he is merely 'the high priest'. For

not in Jerusalem but rather in Antipatris. And the temple on Mt Gerizim is not sanctioned by Alexander and then built by the Samaritans, but rather condemned by Alexander and razed by the Judeans.

Of the two versions, the one that seems more in tune with historical events (despite the clear aggadic elements) is the rabbinic. The usual sources for Alexander's history have been notoriously quiet about his activities in the southern Levant except for the siege of Gaza, a silence that has been taken to mean that nothing interesting happened. One outstanding exception is the report of Curtius Rufus (4.8.10) about Samaritan reaction to the new regime: some Samaritans had apprehended Andromachos, Alexander's appointed governor, and burnt him alive. Alexander cut short his sojourn in Egypt and hurried back to punish the perpetrators of this terrible crime. Unfortunately, Curtius says nothing of the motivation for this action by the Samaritans, nor does he indicate whether it was the initiative of *the* or merely of *some* Samaritans. We may be certain, however, that Alexander did not respond lightly to this rebellious act.[43] The severity of his response seems to be reflected in the punishment meted out to the Samaritans in the rabbinic story: their ankles were pierced and they were dragged about behind galloping horses. Significantly, this was the same treatment awarded by Alexander to the unfortunate commander of the Persian garrison in Gaza.[44] The repetition of this particular method of execution cannot be a coincidence. Rather, it exemplifies how actual events were both preserved and perverted in the long process of storytelling.[45]

him this is indication that Josephus used for the Alexander story a version which contained a different name, viz. Simon the Just. I agree with his conclusion that the story brought in the rabbinic tradition precedes that of Josephus. On Simon the Just as a historical character with mythical (or aggadic) qualities see Amitay 2007; Tropper 2013.

[43] Note in this context Cross' findings in Wadi Daliyeh, which have been interpreted to mean that some affluent members of the Samaritan community tried to hide in a cave there at about the same time as Alexander's conquest, but were discovered and killed. Some of the documents found in their hiding place tantalisingly mention a contemporary by the name of Sanballat. On the discovery and the papyri see Cross 1963, 1974; Dušek 2007.

[44] Hegesias of Magnesia in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De compositione verborum* 18.167–9); Curtius 4.6.29, who says Alexander imitated Achilles' abuse of Hektor's body (Homer, *Iliad* 22.395–400).

[45] In this context consider also the claim of Pseudo-Hekataios that Alexander rewarded Judean kindness and loyalty with the annexation to Judea of Samaritan territory (Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.43). If this assertion can make any claim to factuality, the territory must have been thereafter lost to Judea – we know it was assigned to Judea (again?) by the Seleucid king Demetrios II in the mid second century BC. It is of course also possible that this reference is an anachronistic reflection of this very same event or that it was concocted in order to legitimate the northward expansion of Judea under the Hasmoneans, during the time of Jonathan or of John Hyrkanos I (Bar-Kochva 1996, 113–21; Gruen 1998, 199–201; Barclay 2007, 193–4 n. 146;

The Samaritan connection is present in yet another branch of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition, introducing the clever and jocular Gviha Ben-Psisa:[46]

> On the twenty-fifth of (that month) the demosionai (i.e. tax collectors) were removed from Jerus(alem): That is when the Canaanites came to dispute with Israel before Alexander Macedon, and two more families with them: Egyptians and Ishmaelites. The Canaanites said: 'it is written in the Torah: the land of Canaan to its borders (Num 34:2). Let them give us back what is ours'. And Gvihah Ben-Psisa, warden of the temple, would hear none of it, and he told them: 'Does a verdict exist, whereof one part is annulled and another subsists? And if it is written in the Torah the land of Canaan, it [is (also written) cursed is Canaan], a slave of slaves will he be to his brothers (Gen 9:25). And what belongs to a slave, belongs to his owner; and let me and you (go) before our lord the king.' Straightway they ran off.
>
> Said the Ishmaelites: 'It is written in the Torah: on that day [Yhwh made a covenant with Ab]ram thus: I gave this land to your progeny (Gen 15:18). And we are the progeny of Abraham, for Ishmael was Abraham's son; and let us share (the land) with you!' Gvihah Ben-Psisa, warden of the temple, replied to them: 'It is written in the Torah: and to the sons of the mistresses of Abraham, Abraham gave gifts (Gen 25:6); and it is (also) written: and Abraham gave all that was his to Isaac (Gen 25:5).' Off they ran.
>
> Said the Egyptians: 'It is written in the Torah: each woman borrowed from her neighbor and from her tenant utensils of silver and gold (Exod 3:22). Give us back what is ours!' Gvihah replied to them: 'for 430 years Israel were your slaves, 600,000 foot! Now give each one 200 zuz per year – this adds up to 8,600,000 minae for every one! – and we shall give you back what is yours'. They all departed in great frustration.
>
> Alexander Macedon sought to go up to Jerusalem. The Kutim said to him: 'The ministers of Judea will not let you enter the house of the Holy of

Pummer 2009, 152–5). Be that as it may, the passage seems to signify not only Judean self-justification (Bar-Kochva) and self-association with Alexander (Gruen), but also the long-term memory of anti-Samaritan action by Alexander.

46 The story survives in four different manuscript traditions: the Oxford and Parma manuscripts of the scholion on *Megillat Taanit* on Sivan twenty-fifth; in *Genesis Rabbah* 61.7; and in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 91a (with its own complicated manuscript tradition). Of these the Oxford manuscript preserves the fullest, best version, which I use here. See further in Noam 2003, 198–205. The translation given here was made for Amitay 2016, 138–41, with further discussion. On the whole, the story of Alexander and Gviha has received very little attention in modern scholarship. Besides Noam's preliminary philological work the historical and ideological background of the story has been discussed by Lewy 1933, Amitay 2006 and Kister 2014. Among these, only the work by the present author addresses the story in its entirety, including Alexander's visit to Jerusalem.

> Holies.' What did Gvihah Ben-Psisa do? He made two golden shoes, 50,000 minae each. He said to him: 'Sir, [take off] your shoes and I shall put on you these shoes, for the floor is slippery.' When he came to the place beyond which it is forbidden to enter inside, he said to him: 'from here on it is forbidden to enter inside'. He told him: 'I am going in, and when I come out I shall press your humpback back in!' He told him: 'If you do so, you shall be called an expert physician and charge high fees!' They say that they did not move from the spot until he was bitten by a snake. The sages said to him: 'About you scripture says: be wise, my son, and gladden my heart, that I may answer those who curse me' (Prov 27:11).

This interesting, amusing and obviously legendary story is clearly divided into two distinct parts: the international court sessions and the visit to Jerusalem. On the narrative level the two parts are held together by the active presence of Gviha, the story's true hero. It is remarkable that in the first part of the story Alexander is barely mentioned and hardly plays a role. Indeed, despite the fact that he presides over the court, Alexander does not even get to deliver a verdict. In each of the three cases the plaintiffs realise the weakness of their position and withdraw of their own volition before a formal decision is reached. The emphasis of the first part of the story clearly lies not on the actions of the dramatis personae but rather on the arguments and counterarguments they make.[47] This is supported by the fact that two of the three cases have a rich literary life of their own, beginning with sectarian Jewish literature and carrying on to the present.[48] The second part of the story is markedly different. The issue of the Torah as a source of legitimacy in international affairs is put aside, replaced by the personal interaction between Alexander and Gviha. Both protagonists come to the fore and receive equal shares in the action. The two parts of the story are sewn together by a minimal yet significant Samaritan connection. Although it is presented as yet another accusation levelled against the Judeans by a rival neighbouring group, it is actually not a legitimate argument but rather plain mischief. This literary choice seems to me to corroborate the notion of ancient storytellers that 'Alexander in Jerusalem'

[47] Gviha receives a slightly more prominent role in some parallel tellings of the story (see previous note). Alexander, on the other hand, remains very much in the background.

[48] Biblical arguments about ownership of the land are still very much a part of current Israeli political discourse (and compare the arguments of Simon the Hasmonean in I Maccabees 15:25–36). The claim raised in the story by the Egyptians has been revived recently by a dean of law at Zagazig University in Egypt, in an interview in the newspaper *Al-Ahram* from 9 August 2003 (translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute; Egypt/Dispatch 556, https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-jurists-sue-jews-compensation-trillions-tons-gold-allegedly-stolen-during-exodus, accessed Sept. 13th 2021). For the ancient and late antique literary history of the claims made by both Canaanites and Egyptians see the detailed treatment in Kister 2014.

stories should somehow involve Samaritans, and that this involvement is somehow related to the competing temples of the respective communities.

As I have argued elsewhere, the story in its entirety seems to me to reflect on the one hand the tensions created in the southern Levant by the advances of Hasmonean imperialism and on the other hand the implosion of Judean power at the advent of Pompey and of Roman power in general.[49] To explain briefly: the argument raised by the Canaanites (i.e. Phoenicians), as well as that of the Ishmaelites (i.e. Arabs), assumes a situation wherein a substantial part of the land is in Judean hands. Otherwise, there is no sense in the Canaanite demand to return the land that is theirs, nor in the Ishmaelite desire to share the land with the Judeans. This kind of situation certainly does not fit the time of Alexander, when Judean control was limited to a very small area around Jerusalem. It does, however, fit the time of the later Hasmoneans, when Judean control bordered on Phoenicia and made serious inroads into Arabia. The contextualisation with the advent of Pompey agrees with the situation described in the story, where the Judeans are taken to task for their imperialistic expansion before a foreign conqueror. In fact, comparable situations are described by Josephus (*Antiquities* 14.34, 46–7), who relates that on his arrival in Damascus Pompey received embassies from all of Syria, Egypt and Judea, as well as by Cassius Dio (37.15), who relates that Pompey reacted to Judean attacks on Phoenicia and engaged himself with the Nabateans (i.e. Ishmaelites).[50] Of course, Pompey fits well also with the second part of the story, since he not only visited Jerusalem but also desecrated the temple by entering its inner sanctum.[51] As is well known, Pompey was associated with Alexander both through his nickname of Magnus and by wearing a cloak that had once supposedly belonged to the Macedonian king.[52] On the Judean side, there is good reason to identify Gviha with one of Josephus' ancestors called Kyrtos, who will have been a respected elder about the time of Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem.[53]

[49] For my case in detail see for now Amitay 2006. It is heavily indebted to Lewy 1933, despite disagreement on some major points.

[50] Dio stated that Pompey attacked 'Syria Palaistina'. That what he meant thereby was the Hasmonean state is certain, given his references to the struggles of Hyrkanos and Aristoboulos and to the strange god and religious system of its population.

[51] Josephus, *War* 1.152–3; *Antiquities* 14.71–3.

[52] Plutarch, *Pompey* 13; Pliny the Elder 7.96; Appian, *Roman History* 12.117.

[53] *Kyrtos*, like *Gviha*, means hunchbacked, the same deformity which stands at the heart of the exchange at the threshold of the Holy of Holies. For Kyrtos and Josephus' lineage see Josephus *Life* 3–4. See further in Amitay 2006, 64, with Mason 2000, 7–9 notes 20, 29.

A very different approach to the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition sees it as the product of the Judean community in Alexandria.[54] The underlying logic of this approach is that Alexandrian Jewry produced a body of legendary stories – oral and written – about Alexander in order to exploit the general reverence for him in Ptolemaic Egypt (in particular the fact that he was the founder of the capital city), for the improvement of the community's standing, in relation both to its political enemies and to its self-perception. This approach relies on the close connection of the fourth branch of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition with a foundation story of Alexandria, both appearing in the epsilon recension of the *Alexander Romance*. Yet before we turn to it, we ought first to observe two different literary contexts which have been cited as corroboration for this interpretative approach.

The first consists of a number of references by Josephus to the rights Alexander accorded to Alexandrian Judeans. In *War* (2.487) Josephus remarks:

> Alexander, after he had used very eager Judeans against the Egyptians, gave as a reward for their alliance the [privilege of] settling in the city on an equal footing with the Greeks. (trans. Mason 2000, 350–1)

In *Against Apion* (2.35) he asserts concerning the Judeans in Alexandria that

> Alexander gave them a place for their residence and they obtained privileges equal to those of the Makedonians. (Barclay 2007, 186–7)

There are references to Alexander settling the first Judeans in Alexandria also in chapters 42 and 72 of *Against Apion*, whereas in chapter 37 Josephus refers to otherwise unknown letters ascribed to Alexander, which presumably described these privileges in greater detail. Given the fact that Alexander's role in the actual foundation of the city was rather limited, and that no military activity against Egyptian forces is recorded anywhere in the surviving historical accounts, it stands to reason that these claims (and possibly the mysterious letters alluded to by Josephus) are indeed the product of politically motivated myth-making by members of the Judean community in Alexandria. This does not entail, however, that the same is true also for Josephus' 'Alexander in Jerusalem' story, let alone for that of his source(s). If anything, the detachment of these references from the main story – they appear in different works – testifies against such a connection.

[54] Pfister 1914; Momigliano 1979; Delling 1981; Pacella 1982; Goldstein 1993 (at least regarding the version in the epsilon *Alexander Romance*); Stoneman 1994.

The second story with a clear Egyptian context appears in the life of Jeremiah as told in the collection *Lives of the Prophets*, ascribed to (among others) Epiphanios of Salamis.[55] Jeremiah, we read in the *Lives*, was stoned to death by his own people in the Egyptian city of Taphnes (cf. Jer. 43). Unlike the prophet's compatriots, the local Egyptians held him with great honour for an important service he had rendered them: through his prayer he managed to rid the land of a variety of poisonous snake. The dust from the prophet's burial place was even used to cure snake bites. Furthermore,

> We have been told by the children of Antigonos and Ptolemaios, aged men, that Alexander the Macedonian, when he stood at the place where the prophet was buried, and learned of the mysteries which he had wrought, carried away his bones to Alexandria, placing them round about with due ceremony; whereupon the whole race of poisonous serpents was driven out of the land. With like purpose he had introduced into Egypt the so-called Argolai, that is 'snake-fighters'. (sections 6–7)

The transportation of the remains of a deceased hero in order to solve a difficult situation was not a new idea in the Hellenic world. Already in Herodotos (1.67–8) we read how the Spartans removed the remains of Orestes from Tegea to their own territory in order to gain the upper hand in the military conflict between the two communities. Alexander's body itself was a serious bone of contention, the struggle over which catalysed the outbreak of the Wars of the Successors.[56] The story does, in my opinion, appear to be a product of Hellenistic Egypt. However, nothing in it indicates a connection to the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition or to any other part of the Jewish Alexander stories. As we shall now see, the parallel founding story of Alexandria in the *Alexander Romance* tells a very different story and has no room either for snakes or for the prophet Jeremiah:[57]

(20.1) After these events Alexander commands Seleukos the archon to gather together all of the Persian army. And after the people were gathered together with much haste, they were found [to number] two-thousand-thousands cavalrymen, and a thousand-thousands infantrymen; the rest of the crowd was destroyed in the wars.

[55] I rely here on the text and translation of Torrey 1946, 21–2, 35–6 (and see the appendix on 49–52). According to Simon 1941/62, 136 and (in much greater detail) Satran 1995, the *Lives of the Prophets* in general and the Alexander episode in particular are of Christian Byzantine origin. If so, the story does not belong among the Jewish treatment of Alexander offered in this chapter (and naturally cannot be used to argue about the Alexandrian origin of other Alexander stories).

[56] For these and other examples see Amitay 2010, 90–2.

[57] *Alexander Romance*, epsilon recension, chapters 20, 24. The text is according to Trumpf 1974. The translation was prepared for Amitay 2016.

(2) Taking them in hand together with all of the Macedonian army, he made the march against Egypt. And [as] he lays hold of the Judean land, those who thought to stand against him send scouts, as if they were ambassadors. Nonetheless this did not escape Alexander, and he commands some exceedingly high-born young men from the Macedonian phalanx to leap into a ravine which was there. And they fulfilled the order in all haste, for the Macedonian force was quick to [obey] the things ordered by Alexander. He turned to those who would be scouts, and said: 'You see, ambassadors of the Judean ethnos, that for the army of the Macedonians death is worth nothing. Begone, therefore, and do what is in your interest. And I shall arrive to you tomorrow, and I shall do what is acceptable to providence.'

(3) And having gone away they said among their *archontes*, it is necessary to yield to Alexander and be preserved. 'For there is no hope of salvation for us, for the army of the Macedonian is beyond the nature of humans. For as death is fearful for us, it is not so for the Macedonians, and it is all too easily despised by them. This is what I think: they treat dying as a competition; one might say that they depart as if towards some inexorable necessity. For they amazed us in the great ravine, when these children and so-very-young Macedonians put themselves underwater. As soon as Alexander directed, so soon was the deed completed. And it was not so much their daring to die that terrified us, as [the realisation] that although they knew they had nothing to gain, they still dared to die so indifferently; and should they hope to gain [anything], no one would be able to withstand them! Well then, we told you what we have seen; let there be a decision by you before Alexander arrives, and let our entire plan be put aside.' Thus therefore they heard these things, and they decide to give in to Alexander.

(4) And the priests, having donned their priestly robes, come out to meet Alexander with their entire multitude. And when Alexander saw them he became afraid of their form, and ordered them to come no closer to him, but rather to turn back in [to] the city. And having summoned one of the priests, he tells him: 'How godlike is your form! Do tell me also, which god do you worship, who is attended upon with such form. For I have not seen such good arrangement among the priests of the gods among us.' And he replied: 'we are the servants of one god, who has made the sky and the earth and all of the things seen and unseen. No human has been able to interpret

him.' To this Alexander said in reply: 'As worthy worshippers of a truly great god, go therefore in peace, go! For your god shall be a god of mine, and my peace [is] with you and let me not pass through you like in the other nations, because you have been serving the living god'.

(5) And taking money in both gold and silver, they brought it to Alexander. But he did not want to take [it], saying: 'Let these, and the tax I am foregoing, be my gifts to Lord the god, and I shall take nothing from them.' . . .

(24.1) After spending some time there [in Egypt], he [Alexander] takes it in hand to edify the city. He decorated it with many columns, fortified the walls with tall, high-reaching towers, and built on the eastern gate one tower taller than all the rest. And after making his own statue on it, he set around those of Seleukos, Antiochos and Philippos the physician. That of Seleukos he made with a horn, to celebrate his manliness and fierceness in battle; that of Philippos he made with the attributes of a physician and a soldier; Antiochos was displayed holding a spear.

(2) And after everything had been completed, and the city had become the most beautiful to every eye, Alexander ascended the tower, and expressed contempt to the gods of the earth, and to those in Olympus and of the sea, and he heralded a single god as unfathomable, invisible, and inscrutable, borne upon the Seraphim and extolled by the thrice-holy utterance. And standing on it, Alexander prayed: 'O! God of gods, creator of things seen and unseen, appear to me as a helper in the things I still intend to do.'

(3) And coming down from the tower he went to the palace. He appointed Seleukos as commander to be the leader of the Persians and Philippos of the Egyptians, while Alexander set himself over the Macedonians.

These two episodes, which in the epsilon recension of the *Alexander Romance* create a continuous unit, depict Alexander's growing interest in and adherence to the God of Israel. The reference to the Seraphim and the thrice-holy utterance (clearly a reference to Isaiah 6:3), the distinct similarities between the text and the language of the Septuagint (amidst a sea of Byzantine Greek *koine*) and the narrative cohesiveness of the two episodes when viewed as part of epsilon as a whole all contribute to the notion that we have a text of Judean origin.[58] Indeed, by the end of the work Alexander

[58] Pfister 1914. Delling 1981 offers an invaluable detailed analysis and multiple examples for linguistic parallels from second-temple Jewish-Hellenistic literature. Simon 1941/62 and

appears to become a true monotheist himself. It is also remarkable that in the Judean episode Alexander has no opposite number. The stage is his alone.

Given the nature of the Egyptian-Alexandrian episode, as well as the contextualisation of the Judean episode as part of the expedition against Egypt, an Alexandrian origin of the story has long been assumed.[59] This, however, is not necessarily the case. To begin with, the reference to the foundation of Alexandria – the heart of the story according to this interpretation – seems rather vague. So does the connection to the story of the Judean community, which is merely hinted at by the location of Alexander's tower near the royal palace and the eastern gate at one of the major Jewish quarters of the city.[60] The Josephan references to Judean involvement in the foundation of the city and the story of Jeremiah's bones provide a clear example for a much less subtle allusion. A second, more serious problem is the predominance in the story – and in epsilon in general – of a Seleukos and an Antiochos. Throughout epsilon these two Seleukid-sounding fellows play a key role in the story, command armies, receive the obeisance of conquered kings and armies, act as placeholders for Alexander and found cities in his company and independently. In contrast, there is no Ptolemy anywhere in epsilon, as one might expect from an apologetic or even polemic work written by an Alexandrian Judean trying to assert his position in the city. It would appear that we have to look elsewhere for the origins of this branch of the tradition.

Finally we turn to two rabbinic stories about Alexander which appear to stand independently. The first concerns the experience of Alexander in the land of Katzia:[61]

Merkelbach and Trumpf 1977 have argued on philological grounds for fifth-century or later Christian origins. For a short refutation of their arguments see Amitay 2016, 146–7.

59 Pfister 1914, 6–10, 17–19, 25. Accepted unquestioningly by Marcus 1937, 513–16, and by Delling 1981, 24–5. Goldstein 1993, 98–101, argued for an Alexandrian connection on the assumption that the years after the destruction of the second temple, when many rebels fled to Egypt and created havoc there, provide us with a fitting context when it was 'urgent for Jews in Alexandria to demonstrate to their non-Jewish neighbors that, far from being such fanatics, they were a sensible nation honored by Alexander the Great, who also declared his belief in their God' (quotation from p. 100).

60 Pfister 1914, 10. For the location of this Jewish quarter see Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.33, 36; with Schürer 1973–86, 3.43–4; Barclay 2007, 186–7.

61 *Bereshit Raba* 33a. The text, originally in Aramaic, is given and translated according to Kosman 2003, who argues convincingly that the parallel in the Palestinian Talmud, *Baba Metsia* 2.2=8c is a muddled combination of this story with a folk story of the Midas type, emphasising the foolishness of the obsession for gold. A hint to the alternative version may be preserved in the disc of gold which serves here as a plate, and to Alexander's reaction thereto.

> Alexander Macedon went to the king [or: kingdom] of Katzia beyond the mountains of darkness. They [the local inhabitants there] came out and carried for him bread in a disk [i.e. plate] of gold. He told them: 'Do I need your money?' They told him: 'Did you not have anything to eat in your land, that you came to ours?' He told them: 'I did not need anything but to know how you deal justice.' As he was sitting with them, one person came, and brought a case against his friend. He said: 'This man sold me a ruin [or: a heap of trash] and I found a treasure therein! I bought a ruin, not a treasure.' The one who sold said: 'You bought the ruin and what is in it.' He [the king of Katzia] said to one of them: 'Do you have a male son?' He told him: 'Yes.' To the other he said: 'Do you have a daughter?' He told him: 'Yes.' He said: 'Go and marry her to him, and let both of them have the money.' He saw him [Alexander] sitting and wondering. He told him: 'What, did I not deal justice well?' He told him: 'Yes.' He told him: 'If the case were in your land, how would you deal justice?' He told him: 'We would kill this and that one, and the money would go to the royal [treasury].' He told him: 'Does rain fall in your [land]?' He told him: 'Yes.' He told him: 'Does the sun shine in your [land]?' He told him: 'Yes.' He told him: 'Are there sheep and goats in your [land]?' He told him: 'Yes.' He said: 'Blast the soul of that man! [of Alexander]. For not because of you the rain falls, and not because of you the sun shines, but because of the sheep and the goats!' As it is written: *you save humans and animals alike* – you save humans because of the animals, oh Lord.[62]

This story brings Alexander to another world, which is removed from his (and ours) own not only geographically (it lies beyond the mountains of darkness), but also in relation to human nature (its people are not enamoured of earthly possessions and are fully altruistic). The land of Katzia represents an alternative reality, possibly that of the end of times, when human nature itself changes for the better. Its internal logic strikes Alexander as so absurd that the selfless behaviour of the plaintiff and the defendant (who soon become in-laws) strikes the Macedonian as contempt of court. Alexander may have been chosen as a representative of normative behaviour because he symbolised more than any other character in antiquity the insatiable appetite for further gain and conquest.[63] One wonders whether Alexander's position as an ambassador to and witness of the reality beyond the end of time may be inspired somehow by his role representing the penultimate era in history, discussed earlier.

[62] Psalm 36:7, NRSV.

[63] Up to this point I have followed the illuminating analysis and interpretation of Kosman 2003. For earlier interpretations that see in the story a comparison of the opposing values of Judaism and Hellenism see Wallach 1941, 63–75; Frankel 1981, 144–8.

The last text discussed here, deriving from the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Tamid* (31b–32b), also takes Alexander beyond the mountains of darkness to make him a witness of otherworldliness, and does many other things besides:

> Ten things did Alexander Macedon ask the elders of the Negev: He told them: 'is the distance greater from the sky to the earth or from east to west?' They told him: 'from east to west, for to know: when the sun is in the east, all look at it; when the sun is in the west, all look at it; when the sun is in mid-sky, none looks at it. (And the sages say: both this and that are equal, as it is said: For as the heaven is high above the earth . . . As far as the east is from the west. For if one of them were greater, we would write both as that which is greater! Now, when the sun is in mid-sky, why don't they look at it? Because it stands openly, with nothing to cover it.)' He told them: 'was the sky created first or the earth?' They said: 'the sky was created first, as it is said: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' He told them: 'was light created first, or darkness?' They told him: 'this thing has no solution'. Now they might have told him: darkness was created first, as it is written: And the Earth was without form, and void; and darkness . . . and then And God said: Let there be light! And there was light. They thought [they ought not to] lest he come to ask what lies above and what below, what before and what behind. But if so, they would not tell him about the sky either! They [must have] thought initially that he was asking a random, general question. Yet once they saw his later question, they thought – we shall not tell him, lest he ask what lies above and what below, what before and what behind. He told them: 'Who is called wise?' They told him: 'who is wise? He who sees what is [being] born.' He told them: 'Who is called a hero?' They told him: 'he who conquers his desire'. He told them: 'who is called rich?' They told him: 'who is rich? He who is happy in his lot.' He told them: 'What shall a man do and live?' They told him: 'kill himself'. 'What shall a man do and die?' 'Enliven himself.' He told them: 'what shall a man do and become acceptable to people?' They said: 'let him hate kingship and government'. He told them: 'mine is better than yours. Let him love kingship and government, and act kindly towards the sons of man.' He told them: 'is it better to dwell in the sea, or better to dwell on land?' They told him: 'it is better to dwell on land, for all seafarers are ill at ease until they come up to land again'. He told them: 'who of you is the smartest?' They told him: 'all as one are we equal. For every question which you posited – we solved together.' He told them: 'what reason [have you] for opposing us?' They told him: 'Satan has won.' He told them: 'here I come to kill you by a royal decree!' They told him: 'government [lies in] the hand of the king, and it is

> not fitting for a king to lie'. Forthwith did he dress them in clothes of scarlet, and threw necklaces of gold around their necks.
>
> He told them: 'I want to go to the country of Africa.' They told him: 'you cannot go, for mountains of darkness divide [here from there]'. He told them: 'it won't go that I shan't go, and for this reason I ask you: what shall I do?' They told him: 'fetch Libyan donkeys, who are distinguished in darkness, and bring coils of ropes, and tie [them] on this side; and when you come [on your way back] hold them, and come back to your place'.
>
> So he did, and he went and arriving in that town where all were women, he wanted to make battle against them. They told him: 'if you kill us, they will say "he has killed women". If we kill you, they will say "the king was killed by women"!' He told them: 'bring me bread'. They brought him bread of gold on tables of gold. He told them: 'what [kind of] people eat bread of gold?' They told him: 'but if you wanted bread, was there not bread in your place to eat, that you betook yourself to come here?' When he came to set out, he wrote on the gate of the town: I, Alexander Macedon, had been a fool until I arrived at the African land of women, and took advice from women.
>
> When he betook himself and came, he sat down at that spring; he was eating bread, and in his hand was a salted fish. While he was whitening them, a scent fell on them. He said: 'learn from this – this spring comes from the Garden of Eden'. Now, some say, that he took some water and sprinkled it on his nose. Others say that he followed up the stream, until he reached the entrance to the Garden of Eden. He raised his voice: 'Open the gate for me!' They told him: This gate of Yhwh etc. He told them: 'I am also a king I am! I deem myself important! Give me something!' They gave him a globular object. He came to weigh all of his gold and silver against it, and it did not weigh as much. He told the rabbis: 'what is that?' They said: 'this is an eyeball of flesh and blood, that is never satiated'. He told them: 'from what [do you deduce] that it is so?' [They told him]: 'take a speck of sand and cover it'. [So he did] and it was immediately weighed. As it is written: Hell and destruction are never full.

This text, written mostly in Aramaic but interspersed with Hebrew (both biblical and rabbinic), is fascinatingly variegated. As elsewhere in this chapter its discussion must remain extremely limited, touching only on some major points.[64] The first point which merits attention is that we seem to have here not one coherent story, but rather a medley of stories.[65] The

64 For a much fuller treatment, which nevertheless leaves room for further inquiry, see Amitay 2012 (whence also the translation given here). Note that as it has reached us the text is truncated and garbled and therefore is not always easily interpretable.

65 For earlier attempts to unpack this literary construction and define its constituent units see Lévi 1883, 78–84; Wallach 1941.

first and longest unit of this mélange, Alexander's meeting with the elders of the Negev, has clear parallels in Greek and Latin accounts of Alexander's meeting with the Indian Gymnosophists.[66] However, the *Tamid* story makes a clever inversion. In the Greek and Latin versions Alexander is a representative of the known world vis-à-vis the exotic Indians (a position similar to that ascribed to him in the Katzia story). Here, on the other hand, the position of familiarity (from the Jewish point of view) is taken by the elders of the Negev, as is clear from their knowledge of and reliance on biblical proof texts. Alexander is presented as a highly intelligent foreigner who at first poses a grave danger but then reverses his position and assumes a more friendly attitude – a turn of events comparable to that of the 'Alexander in Jerusalem' tradition.[67]

If the first part of the *Tamid* story echoes a textually diverse literary tradition, the second part appears to be more closely in tune with the *Alexander Romance*. The journey to the land of darkness (2.39), a visit to a city of women (3.25) and the discovery of the water of life (2.39, 41) are all familiar from the *Romance* as early as the alpha recension. The transition between the two parts of the story is symbolised by Alexander's passage through the land of darkness. As in the Katzia story, this passage signals also his transition between a supposedly real and a decidedly mythical world. According to my interpretation, it is in the world of myth that Alexander is called upon to put into practice the lessons he had learned in his congress with the elders.

Thus, when the inhabitants of the city of women argue before Alexander (just as do their Amazonian counterparts in the *Romance*) that fighting them would bring him no honour – by winning he would gain no glory; by losing he would be eternally humiliated – he proves himself wise by foreseeing what is about to happen. Next the women provoke Alexander with a golden loaf of bread (a motif we have seen also in the Katzia story), and prove to him that, as he had learned from the elders, the rich man is the one who is happy in his lot. Alexander recognises this truth and reacts with a display of humour and humility. By refraining from any sexual assault on the women in the city he both practices and proves his ability to conquer

[66] Papyrus Berlin 13044 (second or first century BC; Wilcken 1923; *FGrH* 153.9); Geneva Papyrus 271 (Willis and Maresch 1988); Plutarch, *Alexander* 64; *Metz Epitome* 78–84; *Alexander Romance* alpha 3.6. For sources, discussion and bibliography about Alexander and the Gymnosophists see Stoneman 1995; 2008, 91–106.

[67] An interesting parallel in Jewish Hellenistic literature appears in the *Letter of Aristeas*, where a Hellenistic king conducts a session of philosophical questions and answers with Jewish sages organised in groups of ten.

his desire. Thus far, it appears, the story in *Tamid* gives a highly positive impression of Alexander.

The ending of the story, on the other hand, paints a different picture. Faced with an opportunity to gain immortality (cf. the water of life in the *Romance*) and to reach Heaven, Alexander resorts to his accustomed haughtiness ('I am also a king I am! I deem myself important!') and is refused entry. Exactly when he should have killed himself (i.e. act in the most humble fashion imaginable) in order to enliven himself (i.e. gain immortality), he did the exact opposite. Alexander, it turns out, is very clever indeed; to some extent he is also wise. But he is not as wise as his Judean interlocutors, who seem to predict his downfall ('Satan has won'). May we see the *Tamid* story as criticism by the Jewish storyteller of Alexander's self-deification? Perhaps so. Certainly it is a testament to the ambivalent approach to Alexander in Jewish literature, which we have seen throughout this survey.

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7 The Medieval Alexander

Art and Politics

MAUD PÉREZ-SIMON

During the Middle Ages the iconography of Alexander the Great could be found in religious as well as lay environments. The diversity of illustrated media (mosaics and capitals as well as tapestries and manuscripts) in which his likeness was represented reflects the variety of appraisals assigned to him as a historical figure, from condemnation to admiration. The analysis of manuscripts and artefacts illustrated with images of the Alexander saga show that the same story, written and illustrated in assorted contexts, allowed different and nuanced interpretations: historical, political, encyclopaedic and courteous.[1] The figure of Alexander the Great was particularly used by medieval rulers to solidify their political claims and aspirations through an intentional remastering of classical sources and associated iconography.

The Ascension of Alexander: A Controversial Image for a Controversial Ruler

The most widespread image of Alexander the Great shows him in a symmetrical and heraldic composition, in a cage or a basket, held up by two or more winged griffins. The hero is holding two lances bearing pieces of game – bait for the griffins – to lure them into bringing him up into the sky.

The subject has appeared in Byzantine art since the Macedonian period (the ninth through eleventh centuries) and is still extant in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially in church sculpture (cloisters, tympana and capitals) and decorative pavements.

This is the only one of Alexander's fabulous exploits to be represented in art autonomously. Its iconographic pendant, Alexander's exploration of the sea in a glass barrel, has not encountered the same success. Hence the presumption that the ascension to the sky had a topical and metaphorical

[1] For an overview of the interpretations associated with Old French prose Alexander see Pérez-Simon 2015, chapter 6.

significance. Which image of a ruler was it supposed to convey? In a mosaic found on the pavement of the cathedral of Otranto, two immense trees are represented on either side of the central alley.[2] On one side is the Tree of Good that holds in its branches men and animals symbolic of the virtues. On the other side (Figure 7.1) is represented among the branches of the Tree of Evil Alexander's ascension in his aerial vessel.[3]

Alexander the Great and his travel in the sky seem to have been frowned upon by the clerical authorities. Likewise, on a capital at Basel Cathedral, the celestial journey is clearly associated with the fall and expulsion of Adam and Eve. The fact that the two pictures are engraved on the same capital seems to draw an ironic link between the ascension (of Alexander) and the fall (of Adam and Eve) and to join them in a common reprobation.[4] A proof of the association of Alexander with Pride by medieval moralists is found in the Middle English *Alphabet of Tales*, translated from Etienne de Besançon's *Alphabetum narrationum* (thirteenth century), where Alexander is the chosen example of *Ambitio* and *Superbia.* The condemnation of Alexander's flight is clearly put into words in thirteenth-century German manuscripts of the *Weltchronink* of Jans Enikel. At the end of the Middle Ages, the presence of Alexander and his griffins on misericords in an English church points towards the same kind of interpretation (Figure 7.2).[5] The placing of this design under the seats of the canons is generally not complimentary, and its meaning can range from marginalisation to clerical anathema.

It has been suggested however, that the frontality of the Alexander figure in the ascension scene could imply that he was not only being elevated, but also exalted.[6] In this case his image invokes a parallel with the apotheosis-like image of the Roman empire. Flight could be interpreted as the expression of a longing for heaven and hence as a reference to the heavenly bliss the faithful enjoy in the hereafter. In the manuscripts of the Old French *Prose Roman d'Alexandre*, the addition of a crowd of onlookers in the illuminations shows that the ascension of Alexander could also be understood as an analogy of images of Christ's ascension. In the tapestry of Alexander hanging in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj (Figure 7.3), the presence of God looking at Alexander ascending with griffins can be understood as divine support for his expedition.[7]

There has been much debate among historians about this widespread image.[8] Alexander the Great was a controversial ruler accused by both Greek and Roman historians of hubris, tyranny, bloodshed and insolence, among

[2] Settis-Frugoni 1968 and 1973. [3] Schmidt 1995. [4] Schmidt 1995.
[5] Schmidt 1995, fig. 7.2, pp. 7–8, 11–13, 22, 26–7. [6] Schmidt 1995.
[7] Barbe, Stagno and Villari 2014.
[8] Loomis 1938; Settis-Frugoni 1968 and 1973; Schmidt 1995.



Figure 7.1 Alexander's journey to the sky carried by griffins, Otranto cathedral mosaic (detail), twelfth century. © Edizioni Grifo



Figure 7.2 Alexander's journey to the sky carried by griffins, Chester Cathedral choir stalls, detail of a misericord, 1380. © Stephen Hamilton / Wikimedia Commons

other things, but he was also praised for his courage and conquests at a very young age. His ascension to the sky has been read as a negative exemplum of pride on one side and as an allegory of the salvation of the soul or of the desire of heaven on the other, or, in a secular vein, as an allegory of force. Conclusive evidence for either one of these hypotheses is admittedly lacking. Moreover, the scene has been used in different contexts, but the absence of historical context for most of these images makes it impossible to decide how Alexander was understood at the time and whether the image makers or the image patrons were referring to a specific contemporary ruler or merely to questionable behaviour.

That is why we are now going to look into individual and more historically documented contexts and media to understand how rulers of the Middle Ages used the iconography of Alexander to support diverse political decisions or to claim authority.

The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* Manuscript Tradition and Its Use by Medieval Rulers

The medieval Alexander tradition finds its roots in the novelised version of his biography, which appeared in Alexandria between the first and third



Figure 7.3 God looking at Alexander borne to the sky by griffins. Tapestry (detail), Tournai, 1460s. © Arti Doria Pamphilj srl/ De Wit Royal Manufacturers

centuries, attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes (see Chapter 1 of this volume). In it, the Macedonian's life was infused with Oriental exoticism and other fantasy elements which in turn allowed other narrative and epistolary texts to be inserted into this version of the story. These texts were already associated with the Alexandrian tradition and contained further references to this marvellous imaginary world. The predominant role of marvels in the text is one of the main reasons for the text's success throughout the Middle Ages. The Pseudo-Callisthenes text was translated from classical Greek into Latin and then into more than twenty-seven vernacular languages.

The medieval French tradition is particularly interesting as it spread in numerous illustrated manuscripts, some of them belonging to dukes and kings who used these manuscripts to claim their right to political power. French versions of the Alexandrian saga circulated in the Middle Ages – namely the *Roman d'Alexandre en vers* attributed to Alexandre de Paris[9] in the twelfth century, the anonymous Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre en prose*[10] dating from the thirteenth century and the *Faicts et conquestes* written by Jehan Wauquelin in the fifteenth century.[11] At the same time as the text, an iconographic cycle circulated in manuscripts throughout the world. This iconographic cycle began in antiquity. David Ross found proof of a stable image cycle in a mosaic dating at least back to the fourth century AD in the Greco-Roman city of Heliopolis (present-day Baalbek, Lebanon).[12] His work noted the fidelity to and frequency of this image in the Alexander manuscripts, particularly in the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre*, for at least ten centuries. The fact that there are changes in some of the manuscripts is therefore all the more significant.

In all, sixteen manuscripts of the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* have reached us today, all made in Europe between the end of the thirteenth century and the latter part of the fifteenth.[13] Of these, only eleven are illustrated. All but one of these manuscripts follow the entire aforementioned iconographic cycle that consists of 82–102 illuminations of their content.

It is important to understand the strength of the iconographic programme to fully appreciate the significance of variants, contradictions or effacement of illuminations within any single manuscript of the Alexander the Great tradition. The cataloguing and descriptive work of English art historians D. J. A. Ross and Alison Stones is fundamental in this area as they have shown that a consistent system of illustrations has always existed in the manuscript tradition.[14]

[9] Armstrong et al. 1937–76. [10] Hilka 1974. [11] Wauquelin 2000. [12] Ross 1963.
[13] Ross 1986; Pérez-Simon 2015. [14] Stones 1984, 2015; Ross 1986; Ross and Stones 2002.

The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* is an elegant yet modest and pared-down translation and adaptation from a Latin version of Alexander the Great's life. Stylistic and contextual particularities make it difficult to categorise. This *Roman d'Alexandre* is a generic hybrid – something between a historical text and a novel. This ambiguity of classification offers a potentiality of meaning that the manuscript's sponsors exploited rather adeptly. Medieval rulers particularly used the figure of Alexander the Great to reinforce their political claims and aspirations through an artful remastering of classical sources and associated iconography.

Going on a Crusade

In a Paris workshop in the 1330s a manuscript was created for King Philip VI of France. Manuscript Royal 19 D.i contains a collection of eight texts, all thematically coherent with the Christian Crusades and other explorations of the Far East.[15] Its binding is stunningly ornate, but it is what is inside that makes it singularly important. This work contains Jean de Vignay's translations for the king, one of which is a single-surviving text previously unknown in French found only in this collection. There are many texts dealing with the Marvels of the East such as Marco Polo's *Livre des Merveilles* and others, all full of descriptions or information on a variety of topics including the geography, cultures and societies of the Middle or Far East. The texts include *L'Itinéraire de Terre Sainte* (more documentary and strategic than novel-like, it deals with army routes to and from the Holy Land as well as strategies for battling Muslim forces according to St Louis' military programme) and the *Missions accomplies en Mongolie sur l'ordre d'Innocent III* (a detailed Crusade plan). Other texts offer further historical and biblical examples on how to conduct religious wars. The contents of this collection seem to point to a desire to disseminate propaganda using various narratives, or at least to support Philip VI's stated goal, announced shortly after his ascent to the throne, of going on a Crusade. Placed at the front of the collection, the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* plays a double role: its dense and colourful iconographic programme validates its grandeur and gives it the authority to headline a collection destined for the royal court, and it puts forth the figure of a invincible conqueror whose destiny leads him eastward, into both history and legend. It is the only manuscript of the *Roman* that has an image that represents the second coronation of Alexander (fol. 40 v), in Babylon, an

[15] Dutschke 1998.

act that consecrates his ascent from king to emperor as well as offers a concrete expression of his complete control over the lands and peoples of the Orient. In the context of a collection of texts dedicated to the planning and execution of a Crusade in the Holy Land, the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* – as both a historical and mythical text – is the perfect narrative to offer a complex reading of Christian militancy and ideology from this point in time. One question remains: was the collection put together at the king's request to research how his predecessors went on Crusade, or was it organised by a noble subject who wanted to strengthen the king's position in that area when he saw that the king was not fulfilling his promise?

Reflecting on the Hundred Years' War

One particularity of the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* is the addition in the second half of the thirteenth century of a prologue and an epilogue which situate the biography of Alexander in a much wider historical spectrum, recalling the discords, treacheries and murders in the Macedonian family some generations before Alexander's birth and detailing the wars between Alexander's generals after his death. The young ruler had indeed not designated any heir, hence the dissensions among his companions and the tearing apart of his empire. The most immediate reason for the Hundred Years' War was the fact that the last four Capetian kings died without a male heir. Dealing with boundary disputes, conquest, political rivalries, illegitimacy and wars of succession, the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* echoes most of the major issues at the centre of the Hundred Years' War.

Alexander the Great was indeed part of the reflection during the Hundred Years' War as shown by another manuscript created in a very different context, for a cleric instead of a layperson, or for a commoner instead of a nobleman. This manuscript (BnF fr. 10468) was made in 1439 to be used as a reference book, and it presents the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* as an integral part of a very contextualised reflection on the nature and exercise of power. It is a gathering of twenty texts written in Latin and ancient French compiled for Robert Jolivet, the abbot of Mount Saint Michel in the middle of the Hundred Years' War. One finds here works dealing with ancient history, the history of the kings of France and the history of Normandy. Additionally, there are other documents of a legislative nature as well as some that deal with papal bulls or that make specific reference to aspects of the Anglo-French war. Although somewhat

eclectic, this volume is very coherent insofar as it addresses questions dear to Robert Jolivet – who, we must note, took an active role in the dispute, first on the French side and eventually on the English side. The collection opens with four historical accounts that cover the period of antiquity to the years of the manuscripts' conception. The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* is the keystone of the compilation for it is placed between these historical accounts and the rest of the stories instead of in chronological order, which would have placed the *Roman* at the beginning of the collection. It is the element that unifies the whole. The reason for its placement and its functionality in the collection is that the *Roman* is followed by the *Secret des secrets*, a work not only independent of the Alexandrian saga, but also complementary to it, as a *miroir de prince* working within the narrative.

The *Secretum secretorum*, allegedly written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great, was widely circulated in the Middle Ages. In truth, it was most probably written in Arabic during the tenth century.[16] John of Sevilla made a partial translation into Latin in the first half of the twelfth century, and Philip of Tripoli is responsible for a complete version in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. From the last third of the thirteenth century on, it was translated into Old French (*Secret des secrets*), both in pieces and in its entirety.[17] It was by far the most read encyclopaedia of the high Middle Ages. No fewer than 600 manuscripts of the Latin version have been found, and ten different translations in French.[18] It purports to be the long response Aristotle wrote for Alexander in reply to the latter's announcement of his victory over King Darius of Persia. The philosopher and tutor to Alexander claims to be too old to undertake the journey to rejoin his pupil and help him with the governance of his new subjects, and thus writes a long missive on governance and justice. The text lies at the crossroads of literature, encyclopaedic works and didactic *miroir de prince*.[19] Beyond Aristotle's assertion in this long epistle that he has gathered all the knowledge necessary for Alexander to govern, the narrative itself is a hybrid in style and content with a mix of philosophy, history and science. It deals with subjects as diverse as morality, hygiene, gastronomy, astrology, physiognomy, science and nutrition, as well as the use and implications of power. Alexander is a model for medieval rulers

[16] It was written under the name Kitâb Sirr al-Asrâr circa 950–75 (Monfrin 1982).

[17] A transcription of a manuscript of *Le secret des secrets* (manuscript Baltimore, Walters Arts Gallery W 308) can be read online, D. Lorée, ed., www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/celam/cetm/S2.htm (last accessed 3 March 2012); see end of prologue and first chapters.

[18] William 2003; Schauwecker 2008.

[19] William 2008.

because he was educated and, thanks to the *Secret des secrets*, his knowledge could be transmitted and was indeed widely used by tutors of medieval rulers.

In manuscript BnF fr. 10468, following the *Secret des secrets* are non-narrative texts dealing with specific issues that address the complex political situation at that time in the French kingdom. The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* works as a hinge, articulating two parts of the book and leading from historical and narrative content to documentary and juridical ones. The second half of the manuscript includes documents about the geography and history of Normandy and England as well as laws enacted for Normandy by Charles VII and Henry VI.

The Alexander saga was certainly used as a pretext to reflect on power. But was it decisive in convincing Robert Jolivet to take sides with the king of England? One particularly interesting document is a chronicle of French kings, starting with Henry VI, 'King of France and England'. This text is a reworking and extension of a previously existing chronicle. It replaces Charles VII with Henry VI as the rightful king of France, taking decisively the side of England. There are hypothesis that the author of the text was Robert Jolivet himself.[20]

Though nineteen illustrations were anticipated within the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre*, none were made. This seemingly conscious decision to forego the illumination of a manuscript known for its iconographic tradition points us in the direction that the text was to be read first and foremost for its political insight into the conflict where Robert Jolivet was struggling to discern the lawful sovereign and by extension his rightful place.

Claiming a Throne

As for the king of England, he did use the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* to support his claim to the French throne. This can be observed with a beautiful manuscript ordered by the Duke of Shrewsbury for Marguerite d'Anjou on the occasion of her marriage to the king of England (1445).

Manuscript BL Royal 15 E.vi was offered as a ceremonial gift to the future queen. It was less a work of reference and consultation than a rich royal gift of a superlative nature (large format with 142 sumptuously gilded

[20] Labory 1997, 1998.

illustrations).[21] It contains a series of chronologically ordered, novelised historical accounts which separate themselves from the much more didactical second half of the collection. Overall, these texts are meant to educate a woman such as Marguerite d'Anjou on how to govern, how to make political alliances and wield power and, most important, how to be the wife of the king of England. It was, in short, a *miroir de princesse*.

At a less superficial level, it also conspired to support the king of England's claim to the French throne during the Hundred Years' War, through Marguerite d'Anjou, his future wife and a cousin of the king of France. The manuscript begins with a full-page genealogic tree of French and English kings descending from Saint Louis. Very artistically and cunningly, it eludes the very existence of King Charles VII of France and shows Henry VI as the only legitimate heir of both the French and English kingdoms. The genealogical tree contains a poem on the first page of the manuscript to ensure that there is no ambiguity about the legitimacy of this claim to the throne.

This *Roman d'Alexandre en prose*, being both a narrative and a didactic text, is well suited to lead the collection and to offer a sort of introduction to the many readings. It offers a lively, entertaining and illustrated beginning to each text followed by more technical or erudite topics. And it poses pertinent political questions directly related to the Hundred Years' War, such as the succession of a king without an heir. In a subtle and elegant way, modifications to the iconographic programme of the *Roman* address the same concerns as the overall collection, further indicating its prominence as a first text. One example of this is the representation of Alexander's marriage to Roxanne (fol. 13 v), one of the only two illustrations of its kind in the entirety of the Alexandrian saga. This addition to the normally stable iconographic programme aims to duplicate the marriage for which the manuscript was made, as it echoes the first image of the manuscript featuring Henry VI and Marguerite of Anjou (fol. 2 v) The reader is induced to make a connection between the two rulers. The legitimacy and authority of Alexander reverberate in Henry. Furthermore, in the Alexander saga, Roxanne is believed to be Darius' daughter, the daughter of his dead enemy, and it is through this marriage that Alexander becomes the rightful king of his kingdom. In parallel, Henry VI's marriage to a French noblewoman, descendent of the king of France, establishes his authority over the kingdom of France that he claims in the poem as

[21] Rowe 1932; De Mandach 1974; Reynolds 1993 and 1994, 304; Fresco 2011; Hedeman 2011, A. Taylor 2011; C. Taylor 2011.

rightfully his. This strategy is apparent in that there is a remarkable addition to the otherwise stable image of Alexander's leaving Macedonia to conquer the known world (fol. 9). In this depiction, Alexander leads his army out of town while holding a large red rose (Figure 7.4). There is no explanation for this flower in the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* or



Figure 7.4 Alexander leaving Macedonia, holding a red rose. MS London, B.L., Royal 15 E. vi, fol. 9, fifteenth century. © The British Library Board

in any other parent version. The rose is a clear reference to the house of Lancaster to which Henry VI belonged. This addition, discreet but efficient, replaces the known hero from antiquity with the present-day English king.

Contesting the King of France

The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* spoke to different rulers in different contexts and was cleverly used as a rhetoric tool. Around 1475, the duke of Nemours ordered a manuscript containing only the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre*. This manuscript completely reorganises the Alexandrian iconographic cycle in order to put forth a much more personalised view of power and governance, focussing especially on the integrity and dignity of the body of the ruler. There are eighty-three images in this manuscript, forty-seven of which do not correspond to any previous illustrations within the Alexandrian tradition. Furthermore, we observe a very important discrepancy between the images and their assigned legends. Twenty-four images do not correspond to the legends inherited with the picture cycle and seventeen do not have a legend. We can observe that the illustrations have been modified along two main axes: the discrediting of the male royal figure (greed, anger and cowardliness associated with bad rulers such as Philip and Nectanebo) and the valorisation of the virtues of good governance (justice, charity, prudence, temperance and fortitude) using Alexander as example.[22]

These two categories resonate with the life of Jacques d'Armagnac, who spent most of his adult years plotting against King Louis XI, whom he considered unjust and whom he accused of parsimony in the distribution of his vassals. He might have used his exemplar of the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* to read along with his princely friends and other conspirators to reflect upon what it takes to be a good king in light of the flaws of Louis XI. Incidentally, Jacques d'Armagnac was beheaded in 1477 upon orders of Louis XI for high treason.

Jacques d'Armagnac had a clear understanding of the discursive potential and power of images and was known for intervening in the conception of manuscripts and their iconographic programmes. We also know of his preoccupation with good governance, most notably with the elaboration of his own collection of texts on the subject, *Mignon*.[23] The Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* was one piece of a vast argument against the king of France. As one reads the manuscript, a visual narration competes slowly

[22] Pérez-Simon 2006. [23] *L'Enluminure en France au temps de Jean Fouquet* 2003.

but powerfully with the text, ultimately guiding the reader towards real political issues.

The initial tension between text and image in the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* tradition affords multiple readings, and not only did the figure of Alexander the Great give rise to a polyphony of discourses, it was largely the iconographic representations of the Macedonian king that conveyed the dialogic relationship between these readings. These images are a window into the historical beauty of the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* manuscripts which allow us to go beyond simple aesthetics and peer into the rich meaning contained therein.

Alexander in the Burgundian Court: A Double-Edged Rhetorical Tool

Rewritings of the Old French Prose *Roman d'Alexandre* have been similarly used as political tools, and the dukes of Burgundy mastered the art of using the figure of Alexander the Great to convey different political meanings. Historians have argued that the use of Alexander in the Burgundian court was a sign of nostalgia for the past, but current research has proved that the four dukes of Burgundy were clever politicians and not simply literate dreamers.[24] They had tapestries and one of the biggest libraries in the West, as well as a full understanding of the power of combining texts and images. Art does not seem to be a gratuitous act at the Burgundian court. The four dukes made good use of Alexander the Great, sometimes in direct opposition to each other. It is possible to make a clear distinction between the use of Alexander the Great for Philip the Good (1419–67) and for Charles the Bold (1467–77), the two last dukes of Burgundy.

Philip the Good identifies himself with Alexander as a tool to legitimise his power and to show that he is a model of knighthood and a just sovereign. Jehan Wauquelin wrote *Les Faicts et les conquestes d'Alexandre le Grand*, for him, emphasising all these qualities.[25] He even managed to transform Alexander the Great into a spiritual guide prefiguring Christianity. Philip the Good was so willing to shape his reign on Alexander's that in 1454 he organised a sumptuous banquet modelled on the 'Vows of the Peacock', a famous episode in the Alexander saga showing kings, princes and dukes vowing over the dead body of a cooked peacock to

[24] Blondeau 2009. [25] Wauquelin 2000.



Figure 7.5 'The Vows of the Peacock', Jean Wauquelin, *Livre des Conquestes et faits d'Alexandre*, MS inv. LDUT456, fol. 86, fifteenth century. © Paris Musées / Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris

bring forth victory in war (Figure 7.5).[26] The duke used it as an act of propaganda to announce his intention of launching a new Crusade. The last duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, used Alexander the Great as a model for his military strategic skills. His writer, Vasque de Lucène, described his wars at length. But at the same time, he used Alexander as an anti-model morally speaking: a sovereign puffed up with pride and prone to tyranny.[27] In manuscript BnF fr. 22547, made for Charles the Bold, the images of the war are not only numerous, they are also very detailed and show the many different stages of a war campaign, such as siege and battles, or, more specifically, the review of the troops before entering into battles, the plundering of enemy camps or clemency for the enemy's family. It also portrays a belligerent, aggressive and modern body politic.[28] The book is therefore a *Miroir de prince*. The young Charles the Bold also had a set of tapestries made representing the story and the conquests of Alexander. The aim of the tapestries was to show his wealth, but they took another signification when he had them hanged in his lodgings in Treves, where he met the emperor Frederick III in 1473. Knowing Frederick III had come to negotiate a royal crown, the tapestry takes on its full meaning as a display, for his rival, of Charles the Bold's expansionist aim. In this way, Alexander the Great supports and declares his ambitions.

[26] *Vœux du Paon*, a famous interpolation of the Alexander saga by Jacques de Longuyon. Leo 2013.
[27] Gaullier-Bougassas 1998; Bellon-Méguelle 2011. [28] Blondeau 2009.

The Ruler As a Judge

As we have seen, Alexander the Great was used to convey political meaning in various forms in the medieval period, such as manuscripts, tapestries and frescoes. Painted ceilings are often forgotten in studies of medieval iconography because most of them were destroyed or blackened over time; however, they are currently being rediscovered and have given rise to a fascinating new field of research.

The ceiling of the Main Hall of the Palazzo Chiaromonte Steri in Palermo (1380) expands over twenty-five girders and is a stunning example of an artful and very complex iconographic programme.

Images of Alexander the Great are found among biblical stories as well as stories of antiquity (the war of Troy) and medieval/courtly literature (*Tristan and Isolde*, *Decameron*, etc.). Several images dedicated to the conception and the birth of Alexander, well-known images from the traditional iconography of the Alexander cycle, are followed by a much rarer image: Alexander, cross-legged, in a position of authority, stands on an architectural, hyperbolic throne (Figure 7.6). The image illustrates a passage from the *Historia de Preliis* relating the destruction of Thebes which had no vernacular posterity.[29]



Figure 7.6 Alexander as a judge, Sicily, Palermo, Palazzo Steri, painted ceiling (detail), 1377–91. © Licia Buttà

[29] Steffens 1975; Hilka 1976; Hilka and Steffens 1979.

While Alexander started the siege of Thebes, a Theban musician tried to soften the hero with his music, to make him feel guilty and reverse his decision to destroy the city. The Macedonian remains inflexible in his decision and even demands that the entire city be razed to the ground. This illustration is part of a variation on the theme of the good judge and the bad judge that can be found across the ceiling (the Judgement of Paris, the Judgement of the Old Men Who Have Spied on Susanna, the Judgement of Salomon). According to Licia Buttà, the recurrence of the judicial topos is due to the fact that Manfred III exercised jurisdiction in Palermo and wanted to affirm his willingness to stand as arbitrator of the kingdom during the absence of the Aragonese sovereign. The painted ceiling would thus constitute a kind of visual *Speculum principis*. In this room, where Count Manfred dispensed justice, the textual-visual relationship sought to make plaintiffs and witnesses believe Manfred to be a noble judge and lord, while also legitimising the count's power over Sicily.[30]

Alexander and Aristotle: From Wisdom to Derision

The character of Alexander the Great was used in different contexts to give lessons to the great men of the world and to teach them how to behave. This usage of the Macedonian king was reinforced by the idea that he was the pupil of Aristotle and therefore heir to his ideas as we have seen when we mentioned the *Secret des secrets*, allegedly written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great to guide him through his challenges as an emperor.

Many manuscripts show only one image of the verse *Roman d'Alexandre*, which depicts a young Alexander the Great listening to his master Aristotle.[31] This can also be found on beautiful chiselled ivory caskets from the fourteenth century on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Louvre in Paris.

The imagery of Aristotle tutoring Alexander can also be linked to the iconography of Phyllis riding Aristotle, an image that flourished in the late Middle Ages. The legend states Phyllis was the preferred consort of Alexander the Great. Aristotle instructed his disciple to abstain from amorous relations with her since this diverted him from the manly projects in which he was engaged (e.g. empire-building, philosophy). Phyllis grew angry when Alexander shunned her and grew particularly angry at Aristotle. To avenge herself, Phyllis started flirting with the old philosopher

[30] Buttà 2013.

[31] BnF fr. 790, fr. 1635, fr. 25537 and Oxford Bodleian Library 264. Ross, Pérez-Simon and Stones 2019.

until she finally seduced and humiliated him by riding him like a horse while Alexander hid and watched. When Alexander confronted Aristotle, the philosopher turned his humiliation into a lesson for his disciple: if even the wise and most learned Aristotle could be reduced to a rude animal by lust and the wiles of a woman, how much more would lesser men suffer? The point of this exemplum seems to have been to warn men of the seductive power of women. This story was widespread and led to an extensive replication of the Phyllis-riding-Aristotle image, including reins attached to a bit in the philosopher's mouth, all throughout the late Middle Ages and Renaissance.[32] This image was even and especially found in the home as proved by aquamanile, carpets and plates.[33] Such derision of a once very well-known and respected teaching of Aristotle in the *Secret des secrets* might indicate a slow decline of Aristotle as *the* preeminent representative of the philosopher; it also proves Alexander can be associated not solely with political issues but also with different kinds of teaching and moralisation, including humour.

One amidst the Nine Worthies

From the fourteenth century on, a new type of iconography featuring Alexander became popular – namely the Nine Worthies. The Nine Worthies is list of heroes called 'Worthies' because they surpassed everybody else in their excellence. The subject knew a remarkable rise, from frescoes, as in Castello della Manta (north of Italy, fifteenth century, Figure 7.7), to tapestries, sculptures and enamels. The works are numerous, and they decorated princely residences and public buildings across most countries of Western Europe – France, but also Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain. There is a harmonious distribution of the heroes into three groups, allowing for easy representation that reinforces the viewer's ability to recognise and memorise them. The list of worthy men, traditionally organised into three triads, consists of pagan heroes (Hector, Alexander, Julius Caesar), biblical heroes (Joshua, David, Judas Maccabee) and Christian heroes (Arthur, Charlemagne, Godefroy de Bouillon). This layout follows a predilection for lists at the time and a reflection on glory. What does it take to be a hero? The iconography of the Nine Worthies is very conventional, featuring the nine knights standing side by side with their attributes. The French deck of cards, showing

[32] Marsilli 1984. [33] Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975.1.1416.



Figure 7.7 Alexander amidst the Nine Worthies, Italy, Castello della Manta, fifteenth century. Foto Dario Fusaro, 2020 © FAI – Fondo Ambiente Italiano



Figure 7.7 (Cont.) Alexander, bearded, is second on the right by the chimney

Alexander, David, Caesar and Charles (Charlemagne) as kings and Hector, Ogier, Lahire and Lancelot as jacks, is a direct descendant of the iconography of Alexander the Great as an exemplary ruler and one of the Nine Worthies. Being put into a visual list, Alexander becomes an unanimous hero and his shadows fade somehow. He seems to be less controversial and not to stand out as much as he loses the shine of fantasy linked to his travels into the Orient and to his ascension into the sky.

Imagery of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries is more positive and unanimous about Alexander than the texts of the same period.[34] The tapestries of Lebrun are emblematic in that respect. Alexander is a role model for rulers such as King Louis XIV of France, Peter the Great of Russia, Napoleon and George III of England. Yet, even in those times, Alexander was still a controversial figure in the texts. Mostly discussed in historic, didactic and philosophic texts, he did not cease to be a rhetorical device. His character was distorted and reclaimed with the aim of persuasion regarding trade, politics and religion, among many other contexts.[35] Alexander the Great was continually found in the rhetorical toolbox of authoritarians as a multipurpose argument legitimising their rule.

The analysis of the iconography of Alexander romance shows that the same story, written and illuminated in different contexts, allowed different

[34] Briant 2012. [35] Briant 2012.

and nuanced interpretations.[36] By examining such markers as the textual sequence within a bound collection of manuscripts, the page and manuscript textual-iconographic layout and textual interpolations, we have unfolded the many possible ways medieval rulers used art to give the story a political meaning or use. The diversity of illustrated media (mosaics and capitals, manuscripts, tapestries, frescoes and painted ceilings) participated in and enriched the meaning of the story, allowing it to acquire a new meaning, whether used by rulers to convey a message to other rulers, or by the people surrounding the ruler, to give them counsel.

This extensive iconography reflects the variety of appraisals assigned to Alexander the Great as a historical figure, from condemnation to admiration. The different examples show how controversial a ruler Alexander was, and how opposing the interpretations of him were, whether in Roman churches or in the Burgundian court, spreading even to his master Aristotle who was in turn looked up to or mocked. His iconographical success in the end faded somewhat after his consecration as one of the Nine Worthies, but he did not lose his ambiguity, even less his polysemy as he kept being a powerful argumentative device throughout the centuries.[37]

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36 Pérez-Simon 2015, chapter 5. 37 Raynaud 1993.

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8 Alexander the Great and the Crusades

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Alexander the Great invited the medieval West to contemplate the wider world as did few historical figures. Although a pagan, Alexander occupied a foundational place in ecclesiastical as well as lay conceptions of history and geography in the Middle Ages. It should therefore come as no surprise that Alexander was closely assimilated to Crusade ideology and historiography in late medieval Europe. The Crusades were not only or even principally battles, but also colonial, diplomatic and commercial enterprises that had global implications and put Western Europeans into contact with communities well beyond the relatively small theatre of intermittent military operations.[1] Alexander's legend, or *mythistoria*, was particularly relevant in this context because it told a story of East-West interaction that included curiosity, discovery and negotiation, as well as violent conflict.[2] Alexander's life offered many ways for medieval Europeans to conceptualise their encounters with foreign peoples and places over a period of several centuries. For this reason, along with Alexander's stature in the historiographical corpus, his biography was viewed as an authoritative commentary on the complex relationship between East and West in the age of Crusade.

At the most basic level, Alexander was assimilated to Crusade because the geography of his conquests corresponded to the Crusaders' objectives – he had been where they were. Moreover, as a military leader Alexander was an incomparably useful and pertinent example in the Crusade era. He possessed a seemingly supernatural ability to lead a small group of men to astonishing victories in hostile territory that included the Holy Land and realms further south and east that medieval Europeans too wished to conquer. Yet his success was also political and came not only through violence. As the opening of *Roman d'Alexandre* states, he knew when to fight and when not to, and how to maintain the loyalty and unity of those who served him – skills Crusade leaders sorely needed.[3] Equally important, the Alexander of legend was closely tied to the theological and eschatological dimensions of the Crusades: he had defeated Asiatic tyranny and

[1] See Riley-Smith 1995. [2] Gaullier-Bougassas 2011, 5–34. [3] Harf-Lancner 1994, 70–1.

idolatry, had explored marvellous lands and dominated monsters in the East and had enclosed the demonic tribes of Gog and Magog. His adventures prefigured the travels and travails of the Crusaders and confirmed they were participating in an age-old struggle that predated Christianity and that would end only at Judgement Day.

Alexander's assimilation to Crusade occurred within both the clerical-Latinate and the lay-vernacular spheres, with a fair degree of overlap between the two. The chronicling of Alexander within both spheres surged after the First Crusade and was repeatedly given new impetus in the succeeding centuries by various events. For the clerical elite these events included later Crusades actual or aborted, the rise of universities, the Mongol invasion invasions and the development of encyclopaedism. For the lay nobility Alexander was an important figure in chivalric literature and vernacular historiography from the twelfth century on, in the celebration and later commemoration of the Crusades, and was also revived as a proto-Crusader due to the growth of cities and the concomitant expansion of both vernacular book production and chivalric pageantry. Perhaps the principal distinction between the Alexander of each group is that the clerics focussed principally on Alexander's connection to eschatology and apocalypse, while the warrior nobility was more interested in Alexander's military exploits. Yet there is no neat distinction between the clerical and lay visions of Alexander since clerics often wrote for the laity, who through their commissions and taste in turn influenced what was written and how. The two spheres were in constant dialogue and, particularly as pertains to Crusade, shared many of the same concerns. In Alexander they found a figure whose story addressed these concerns even as it accommodated different historiographical approaches and values.

This chapter examines Alexander's relationship to medieval European understandings and representations of Crusade by focussing on three areas: historiography and literature, manuscript compilation and illumination, and cartography. Well before the crusading era, Alexander embodied Western anxiety about Eastern monstrosity and apocalyptic threats. He was early assimilated into Crusade historiography and for centuries thereafter, in both Latin and vernacular works, his legend would be moulded into a prefiguration of the Crusades – through selective citation of eschatologically inflected passages in clerical works, through extensive medievalisation that transformed him into a proto-Crusader in vernacular texts. This process of assimilation and transformation is visible too in the medieval manuscripts preserving Alexander texts. Through compilation, manuscripts absorbed works such as *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*

(*Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*) or *Historia de Preliis* (*History of Alexander's Battles*), which predated the Crusades, into Crusade historiography by juxtaposing them to Crusade chronicles. Manuscript illuminations employed iconographic motifs that transformed Alexander into a medieval knight or even Christian figure and his enemies into Saracens or demonic figures akin to those described in the chivalric epics known as *chansons de geste*, which often recounted the battles between Christians and Muslims or pagans. Finally, medieval maps reflected the extent to which Alexander's legend influenced late medieval apocalyptic geography, particularly through the recurring appearance of Gog and Magog and other monstrous peoples. The material in each section is presented chronologically and focusses mainly on francophone realms, where the confluence of crusading fervour, interest in antiquity and sophisticated literary and visual culture led to a remarkable wealth and variety of Alexander works.[4]

Historiography and Literature

The idea that an essential and antagonistic division exists between the West and the East reaches back to Greek antiquity. As Edward Said writes, 'the demarcation between Orient and West . . . already seems bold by the time of the *Iliad*'.[5] By the time of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, the conceptual framework equating Greece with civilisation and order and lands beyond Greece with barbarism, tyranny or decadence was well established. Although more than a millennium separates them, it is reasonable to argue that the world views of both Alexander and the Crusaders were formed by a remarkably durable tradition of othering, and often of outright demonisation, of the East. Empires rose and fell, polytheism gave way to Christianity, but the notion endured that Europe and Asia, Occident and Orient, were fundamentally different in nature and moral worth.

In fact, we may trace the early historical trajectory of Orientalism in large part through the transmission of Alexander's biography in Europe in the centuries after his death. The textual traditions of the Alexander legend so widespread in medieval Europe originated in antiquity. They may be divided into a historiographical and rationalist branch and a more fantastical branch at the root of which is the ancient Greek *Alexander Romance* of

[4] Another reason to focus on francophone realms is that Alexander was a model ruler for north-western European lords, while in southern Italy, another centre of production of Alexander texts, there was 'a local reluctance to emulate Alexander' (Stone 2016, 727).

[5] Said 1978, 56.

Pseudo-Callisthenes.[6] This work, translated and adapted into Latin (the most common source being the *Epitome*, or abridgment, of the fourth-century Julius Valerius' *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis*), became the foundation for the majority of medieval European Alexander texts. Its salient features are accounts of battles, of the marvellous and supernatural phenomena (peoples, creatures, stones, palaces, temples, etc.) that Alexander and his army encounter, and of moments of exemplary leadership that manifest Alexander's wisdom and courage. Excerpts and adaptations devoted to these themes sprouted from the romance and circulated independently, for example as *Historia de Preliis* and *Epistola*, the latter describing the marvels Alexander encounters in India.[7] The Alexander corpus is a remarkably rich terrain for the study of ancient and medieval Orientalism, as it both demonises and extols the Orient in a manner that anticipates later colonial discourses and enterprises including the Crusades.

Among the several episodes in the Alexander corpus that prepared Alexander's assimilation to Crusade history, one of the most important is that of Gog and Magog. These demonic peoples appear in the Old Testament as enemies of the Jews and in the New Testament as allies of Antichrist. As Anderson has demonstrated, it was most likely in the early fifth century AD that apocalyptic traditions concerning Gog and Magog fused with the legendary account of how Alexander enclosed barbarian tribes behind a massive gate in the Caucasus.[8] In this new, hybrid version of the legend Alexander constructs the Caspian Gates, or Alexander's Gates, to enclose Gog and Magog, who will burst out of their imprisonment at the end of time.

The influence of this story on the medieval European imagination can hardly be overstated, its popularity due largely to its integration into the late seventh-century *Revelations* or *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, which was copied and adapted throughout Europe beginning in the eighth century.[9] In particular, the story incited European Christians to look for signs that Gog and Magog were free; the appearance of any people perceived as a threat by Christendom could be interpreted as an indication that the end was nigh. As Anderson observes, over the centuries various authorities equated Gog and Magog with Alans, Arabs, Celts, Goths, Huns, Mongols and Turks.[10] This legend is thus significant because it made

[6] Space constraints do not permit even a cursory overview of these textual traditions. See Meyer 1886, Cary 1956, Ross 1963, Stoneman 1991 and Gaullier-Bougassas 1998, 2011.

[7] This is technically the δ version of Pseudo-Callisthenes.

[8] Anderson 1932, 16–20.

[9] Anderson 1932, 44–51.

[10] Anderson 1932, 12–14.

Alexander a crucial figure within the Christian eschatological framework. Furthermore, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter, the story occupied and narrativised portions of the map that had previously been terra incognita.

This brings us to the era of the Crusades and of Crusade historiography, which begins immediately after the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099. It is surprising, and also instructive, that Crusade chronicles do not mention Alexander in association with Gog and Magog despite the fact that the legend had circulated in Europe for centuries by the early twelfth century. Alexander appears in chronicles rarely, and usually only to display the classical learning of the author, or for purposes of encomiastic or vituperative comparison. Thus Ralph of Caen's *Gesta Tancredi* (completed *c*.1118), one of the earliest surviving Crusade chronicles, mentions Alexander twice: once to say that Baldwin, the king of Jerusalem, surpassed Alexander, and once in a speech in which Robert Guiscard is described by his grandson Tancred as 'second only to Alexander in audacity'.[11] Guibert of Nogent (d. 1125) includes this passage in the opening of his *Dei gesta per Francos* (*Deeds of God through the Franks*):

> We admire foreign nations famous for military strength; we admire Philip for his merciless slaughter and victories everywhere, never without relentless shedding of blood. We commend with resounding rhetoric the fury of Alexander, who emerged from the Macedonian forge to destroy the entire East. We measure the magnitude of the troops of Xerxes at Thermopylae, and of Darius against Alexander, with the terrible killing of infinite numbers of nations.[12]

However, his main point is that moderns have no need to prefer anything done by the ancients to their own great deeds in the Holy Land. Later, Guibert will mention that 'Alexander, battling the Eastern kingdoms, worn out with great battles, managed to acquire the name of the Great', in contrast to the many Christian lords who did not participate in the First Crusade so that glory might accrue to God alone.[13] Alexander receives a brief mention in Fulcher of Chartres' (d. 1128) chronicle in the chapter 'De diversis generibus bestiarum et serpentium in terra Sarracenorum' ('On the Different Kinds of Animals and Serpents in the Land of the Saracens'), itself a paraphrase of Solinus, who in turn draws on the ancient

[11] Bachrach and Bachrach 2005, 61, 152. The latter quote is repeated in Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Heirosolymitano Itinere* (*c*.1110).

[12] *Recueil des historiens des croisades* vol. 4, 123.

[13] *Recueil des historiens des croisades* vol. 4, 250.

Alexander Romance and the *Epistola*.[14] The Rothelin Continuation of William of Tyre, which covers the period 1229 to 1261, interpolates an excerpt from the early twelfth-century *Iter Alexandri Magni ad Paradisum* (*Journey of Alexander the Great to Paradise*).[15] A very late example of this clerical – now humanist – citation of Alexander is that of Benedetto Accolti (d. 1464), who in his *Historia Gotefridi* declares Godfrey of Bouillon's victories to be far superior to the depredations and avarice of Alexander.[16]

Most references to Alexander in Crusade chronicles relate to the founding or history of sites in the Holy Land and Egypt. Places inscribed Alexander into the physical landscapes Europeans encountered, as well as into the imaginary ones they created during the Crusade era. This inscription is visible in toponyms: the cities of Alexandria in Egypt and Alexandretta (modern İskenderun in Turkey) and the castle of Scandalion south of Tyre all commemorated Alexander's conquest of the Holy Land. Alexandria plays a particularly important role in Crusade history and historiography as it was one of the largest and, geographically speaking, most easily accessible ports in the region.[17] Alexander is also mentioned in passages devoted to Antioch, since the city was named after one of his generals, and in relation to Tyre and Jerusalem, both of which he conquered.[18] It is possible that references in Crusade chronicles to 'Babylon' reminded learned readers of Alexander's conquest of and death in that city.[19] Most curious is that the chronicles for the most part do not include the episode of Alexander sparing Jerusalem, venerating the Jewish God, and thereby acquiring the divine favour that allowed him to continue his conquests. Fulcher of Chartres makes a brief mention of this story, which had circulated since at least the first century AD and appeared in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*.[20]

It is in twelfth-century vernacular literature rather than in Crusade chronicles that we see the earliest fashioning of Alexander into a proto-Crusader. The rise of vernacular writing in this period is of course

[14] *Recueil des historiens des croisades* vol. 3, 475.

[15] *Recueil des historiens des croisades* vol. 2, 583–9.

[16] *Recueil des historiens des croisades* vol. 5, 611.

[17] Alexandria also appears repeatedly in romances as the source for sumptuous objects such as jewels and textiles.

[18] See William of Tyre; Exordium S. Andreae, chapter 2, for Antioch; see elsewhere for Tyre and Jer.

[19] Deluz 2004, 242, n. 18: 'The name of Babylon given by the Copts to Old Cairo comes no doubt from the deformation of Pi-Hapi-On, the temple of Hapis in Heliopolis. The Crusaders transmitted this name to the Occident to designate the old Christian city in Cairo.' See also Westrem 2001, 130.

[20] Ross 1963, 33–4.

a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, but certainly one of the impetuses behind it was the raised awareness of and curiosity about the world beyond Europe occasioned by the Crusades.[21] It is likely not a coincidence that the principal leaders of and a great many participants in the First Crusade were francophones and that vernacular French texts about Troy, Thebes, Alexander and Aeneas, all of which are situated in the eastern Mediterranean, begin to appear in the twelfth century; or that the oldest surviving copy of *Song of Roland* post-dates 1099 and appears to come from Normandy, whence many of the earliest Crusaders hailed.[22] Many people were affected by the Crusades, even those who did not participate directly, and it is perfectly reasonable to assume that by implicating as they did a variety of social groups and the most fundamental understandings of religion, identity, history and authority, the Crusades would influence collective consciousness and its expression in literature and other arts. Like many other historical and literary figures, Alexander became a vehicle for imagining and contemplating the nature, meaning and ramifications of East-West contact.

Romance vernacular works devoted to Alexander began to appear early in the twelfth century, but were initially devoted to recounting his *enfances*, or youth and first battles.[23] It is apparently in the 1170s that vernacular authors started to compose the rest of his biography, and in so doing assimilated Alexander to Crusade historiography. Perhaps the earliest vernacular example of the fusion of Alexander's legend with Crusade narrative is *Fuerre de Gadres* (*Raid of Gaza*), a poem of circa 1170.[24] The author, a certain Eustache, takes as his inspiration an episode from *Chanson de Jérusalem* (*c.*1135), a verse epic celebrating the First Crusade in which Crusaders undertake a raid in the Valley of Jehosaphat outside of Jerusalem. In *Fuerre*, Alexander's soldiers raid the same valley and like the Crusaders are beset by an overwhelming enemy force. As in *Chanson de Jérusalem*, there is a debate among Alexander's men about whether to send to the leader for aid; this may also be an echo of the debate between Roland and Oliver in *Song of Roland*. Not only the setting and action but also the form of *Fuerre* link it to Crusade narratives, as it is written in stanzas (*laisses*) with assonanced rhyme like *chansons de geste* and earlier Crusade epics; moreover, like the Crusade epics, it is written in dodecasyllabic verse.

[21] Kinoshita 2006.

[22] The date of *Song of Roland*'s composition remains a question, but even if the poem predates the Crusades, as seems likely, its appearance in later manuscripts suggests the Crusades revived interest in it.

[23] Meyer 1886 vol. 2, 61–101.

[24] Meyer 1886 vol. 2, 237–45; Baumgartner 2002.

Alexandre en Orient, a text contemporary to *Fuerre* that recounts Alexander's expedition into India and his encounters with its marvels, also bears the imprint of literary tastes inspired by the Crusades. The author, Lambert le Tort, draws on the Latin summary (*Epitome*) of the ancient romance, on the *Epistola* and on other sources such as the bestiary to invent a new, amplified version of the legend.[25] Lambert inserts two episodes that have particular resonance with Crusade: that of the Perilous Valley where Alexander, Christlike, chooses to sacrifice himself so that his army may be free and escapes after outwitting a demon, and that of the enclosure of Gog and Magog.

Another important indication of Alexander's assimilation to Crusade narrative is *Roman de toute chevalerie* (*Romance of All Chivalry*), composed in Anglo-Norman French circa 1175–85 by Thomas de Kent.[26] This verse account of Alexander's life from birth to death draws on the *Epitome*, *Epistola*, encyclopaedias, universal histories, *chansons de geste* and bestiaries, among other sources, and is significant because it is the first complete life of Alexander in the vernacular. It reflects historical concerns conditioned by the Crusades in its lengthy description of Alexander's encounters with strange and monstrous creatures in India (composed independently of Lambert's *Alexandre en Orient*), its emphasis on the apocalyptic threat posed by Gog and Magog, and most obviously its account of Alexander's abandonment of paganism and pledge of faith in the Jewish god.[27] From the moment of his conversion in Jerusalem until the end, Alexander's monotheism is a principal theme of the story. In Thomas' telling, despite divine rebukes in response to his conquests and exploration, Alexander remains firm in his faith, for which he is rewarded. Alexander's death, which he humbly accepts, is presented entirely as the result of treason and not of divine punishment.[28] The message that a warrior fighting far from home must endure terrible trials and that victory comes through faith could not have been more appropriate in the crusading era.

Despite its encyclopaedic breadth and literary quality, *Roman de toute chevalerie* achieved little success and had only a minor influence upon later literature. It was overshadowed by the *Roman d'Alexandre* (*Romance of Alexander the Great*) of Alexandre de Paris, who in the 1180s assembled a number of existing Alexander texts – including *Fuerre de Gadres* and *Alexandre en Orient* – into a vast biography of the hero that became one of the most widely copied and influential romances of the late medieval and

[25] Meyer 1886 vol. 2, 214–23.

[26] Gaullier-Bougassas 1998; Gaullier-Bougassas et al. 2003; Stone 2019.

[27] Akbari 2009, 86–104. [28] Gaullier-Bougassas et al. 2003, lxii–lxv.

early modern period.[29] Like the earlier Alexander texts, *Roman d'Alexandre* clearly bears the imprint of the Crusades. Alexandre de Paris integrates *Fuerre* into branch II of his romance, which recounts Alexander's siege of Tyre, a major target of crusading efforts. *Roman d'Alexandre* describes Alexander's capture of Ascalon and Jerusalem, although here Alexander only venerates the Jewish god and does not become a monotheist as in *Roman de toute chevalerie*. *Roman d'Alexandre* retains almost verbatim *Alexandre en Orient*, but adds a second battle for Babylon. Along with the Gog and Magog episode, it seems likely that Alexander's conquest of and death in Babylon also contributed to his assimilation into the Christian eschatological framework, given the city's prevalence in apocalyptic discourse and imagery. *Roman d'Alexandre* also casts Alexander as a proto-Crusader by describing his foes in the same terms used for Muslim and pagan enemies in Crusade sermons, chronicles and *chansons de geste*. They are portrayed as idolaters, they are said to worship both Apollo and Mohammed, they hail from the same parts of the world as the forces who fought (or were imagined to fight) the Crusaders, and they are referred to as Saracens or given the names of contemporary Islamic groups (e.g. Almoravid).

This is not to say that either *Roman de toute chevalerie* or *Roman d'Alexandre* is principally about the Crusades. These texts appealed to a wide array of interests and readers, and satisfied a curiosity about Alexander that likely had more to do with his extraordinary persona and adventures than with his foreshadowing of the Crusades. Nor do they address crusading, apocalypticism and eschatological themes in the same manner. It could be argued that *Roman de toute chevalerie*, with its extended Gog and Magog episode and monotheistic Alexander, is more concerned with integrating Alexander into salvation history than is *Roman d'Alexandre*. Nonetheless, it is significant that all of these authors – Eustache, Lambert, Thomas and Alexandre – decided to assimilate Alexander's story to narrative and geographical frameworks that were used in Crusade epics, *chansons de geste* and other works more or less directly concerned with the Crusades. These texts signal a shift in what Alexander could mean to late medieval readers. Depending on one's inclinations, education and experience, one could see Alexander as a parallel to Christ (both suffer for their followers, are betrayed and die young), as a warrior whose battles prefigured those of the Crusades or both. Militant Christianity provided these and later writers with language and

[29] Meyer 1886; Harf-Lancner 1994; Gaullier-Bougassas 1998.

forms for relating, or rather revising, the ancient past in light of the crusading present.

Contemporary to this cluster of vernacular texts is Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* (1176–82), one of the most popular works of Latin literature of the entire medieval period.[30] Walter's ambition was to rival the authors of antiquity, and he chose to write of Alexander because no ancient epic about him existed. The *Alexandreis* is thus an homage to classical literature and a bravura display of classical learning. It also contains at least two passages related to Crusade. The first is an overt reference in a narratorial intervention that echoes the comparisons made by Crusade chroniclers. The narrator states that

> If pious prayers and tearful lamentation moved mercy from on high to grant the Franks a king like [Alexander], the True Faith would shine forth unhindered through the earth, and Parthia, broken by our arms, would beg unbidden for baptism's renewal, while high Carthage, which long lay ruined, soon would rise again at the mention of Christ's name.[31]

That is, a Christian Alexander would complete the conquest begun by the Crusades. The second reference is an echo of Gog and Magog. Satan, hearing of Alexander's threatened invasion of the Antipodes, imagines that this will fulfil the prophecy of the Harrowing of Hell.[32] This is both an in-joke for the learned clerical reader (Satan misinterprets events) and an inversion of the prophecy of Gog and Magog, who are enclosed by Alexander and will burst forth to join Satan's forces.

The 1170s also witnessed the composition of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, a universal history that, judging by the manuscript evidence, enjoyed as much if not more success than the *Alexandreis* in the late Middle Ages. Comestor is significant because he seems to have originated a novel twist on the Gog and Magog legend. Whereas the early medieval account describes Alexander's enclosure of these savage tribes whose names have biblical and eschatological resonance, Comestor states that Alexander walled off the ten lost tribes of Israel who had been exiled from the Holy Land and never accepted the true God.[33] Comestor further assimilates these tribes to Gog and Magog, whom he does not mention, by noting that they will escape at the end of time and cause great destruction.[34]

[30] Townsend 2007. [31] Townsend 2007, 126. [32] Townsend 2007, 201–2.

[33] On this legend in Germany see Gow 1994.

[34] Godfrey of Viterbo, writing around the same time as Comestor, states that Alexander enclosed both the ten tribes and Gog and Magog.

The *Letter of Prester John* is another influential work that assimilated Alexander to Crusade and to the millenarianism of the twelfth century.[35] Reference to Prester John first appears in the chronicle of Otto of Freising, who states that in 1145 a bishop arrived in Rome and told of a Christian king in the East who had defeated a Muslim army and whose westward advance was hindered by the Tigris. By 1165 a letter in Latin from this Christian potentate, Prester John, was circulating throughout Europe, where it was early translated into many vernaculars. The letter, which had several variants, describes different aspects of Prester John's realm, extols his wealth and might, and repeatedly declares that the king and his people are Christians loyal to Rome. The letter draws on a wide range of sources, including Alexander texts, and by the end of the twelfth century it included extensive references to the fact that Prester John had fortified and established surveillance over the walls enclosing Gog and Magog. It seems likely that this addition was a direct response to both the success of *Alexandreis* and *Roman d'Alexandre*, and to the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187. In effect, Prester John became the heir to Alexander in the East; he continued the Macedonian's civilising and defensive mission and was, as it were, the Christian king dreamed of in *Alexandreis*. The letter is thus of particular significance because it updates Alexander's legend and brings it into the present in direct response to medieval concerns about apocalyptic threats and the loss of Crusader territories.

Between circa 1190 and circa 1220, a massive literary project was undertaken to celebrate in largely fictionalised form the deeds of the earliest Crusaders, particularly Godfrey of Bouillon. The result was the *Old French Crusade Cycle*, a hybrid of chronicle, romance and *chanson de geste*. Alexander makes only two appearances in the cycle, but both are intriguing. In the second poem in the cycle, a rewritten version of the aforementioned *Chanson de Jérusalem*, the Sultan of Persia's lavishly decorated tent is said to have belonged to Alexander. In the fourth poem, the *Chevalier au cygne* (*Swan Knight*), the counsellors of Emperor Otto meet in a room in the imperial palace on whose walls are painted images of Alexander fighting the Indian king Porus and of the construction of the city of Bucephala. Ekphrasis enables the author to insert Alexander into the story without interrupting narrative continuity. As with the *Letter of Prester John*, these passages are almost certainly a response to the success of *Roman d'Alexandre*, and invite the informed reader to link Alexander's story to that of the *Crusade Cycle*. The reference to the tent recalls Alexander's

[35] Beckingham and Hamilton 1996; Akbari 2009: 52–66, 86–8.

pretension to universal dominance, since in *Roman d'Alexandre* the tent is described as decorated with a map of the heavens and a *mappa mundi*. The informed reader would see that the Sultan of Persia is equally grandiose in his ambitions. As for the painted chamber, the evocation of Alexander in a story largely devoted to Godfrey of Bouillon suggests a direct parallel between the two, which indeed there is: both are great conquerors who win against terrible odds, and both are betrayed and die of poisoning. The shape of Godfrey's life thus corresponded to that of Alexander in a historically symmetrical manner.

A significant indication of the renewed popularity of Alexander in the wake of *Roman d'Alexandre* is the Old French *Prose Alexander*, produced some time between 1206 and 1290. Like Walter of Châtillon, the anonymous author clearly wished to write something 'new' about Alexander, and so wrote a translation/adaptation of *Historia de Preliis*.[36] Although it recounts the stories of Alexander kneeling before the rabbi of Jerusalem and of Gog and Magog, the Old French *Prose Alexander* is much less concerned with presenting Alexander as a participant in salvation history than are *Roman de toute chevalerie* and *Roman d'Alexandre*. The enclosing of Gog and Magog is described very summarily, and no reference is made to their connection to Antichrist, unlike in *Roman d'Alexandre*. The prose romance's Alexander is pious and invokes God's aid, but in a formulaic manner that neither implies the Christian God nor implicates Alexander in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. To the extent that this Alexander is related to Crusade, it is through geography and echoes with other texts or through manuscript illumination rather than the intention of the author.

Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César (*Ancient History to the Time of Caesar*), a universal history composed between 1206 and 1230, is another work of prose historiography in which Alexander plays a significant role.[37] The text contains a lengthy account of Alexander's sparing of Jerusalem and veneration of the Jewish god, into which the author interpolates an address scolding his audience for being Christian yet failing to show as much reverence to God's ministers as the pagan Alexander did. A similar apostrophe occurs in the account of the banished and cursed peoples (the text does not mention Gog and Magog). The text says that the mountains close them in when Alexander prays to the Jewish god, after which the narrator asks the reader how much more God will do for Christians who have faith in him, seeing how much he did for Alexander. The narrator emphasises

[36] Pérez-Simon 2015. [37] De Visser-Van Terwisga 1995/9; Croizy-Naquet 1999.

that Alexander was a 'Saracen' all the days of his life. While there is no overt mention of the Crusades in these passages, they nonetheless echo the common opinion that the Crusades had failed and that Christian power was waning because of sin. It is in any event possible, if not likely, that contemporaries read these moralistic messages into the text, especially given the fact that four manuscripts of *Histoire ancienne* were produced in the crusading states.

The Mongol invasions of Russia and Central Europe between 1237 and 1242 gave new life to the Alexander legend, particularly as it pertained to the enclosure of Gog and Magog or the ten tribes. The European reaction to the Mongols offers exceptional insight into the extent to which geography, history, legend, news, rumour and theology swirled together in the minds of intellectuals and rulers. In the 1220s, as the first reports of Mongol campaigns arrived in Europe, clerics interpreted them as confirmation of Prester John's existence. Once the menace became evident in the 1230s, this opinion was revised. Several authors suggested or outright declared that the 'Tartars', as the Mongols were called, were Gog and Magog, or the ten tribes, or both, and that their appearance heralded the coming of Antichrist and the end of time. We find this assessment in the writing of Matthew Paris, William of Rubruck, Roger Bacon and Riccoldo da Montecroce, among many others.[38] In this millenarian context these legends acquired the force of prophecy, their authority enhanced by the fact that so many were referring to them in the clerical echo chamber. These legends resonated too because the need for a charismatic and unifying leader such as Alexander was acute. However, it is also worth noting that Marco Polo, in his *Description of the World* of 1298, twice refutes these identifications: he first says that Alexander enclosed the Cumans, not the Tartars, because the Tartars did not exist then; and later says that what Europeans call Gog and Magog, the Mongols call Ung and Mungul, that these are toponyms, and that because the Tartars lived in the latter region they are called Mongols.[39]

Another major vernacular prose work that includes the eschatological Alexander tradition is Guyart des Moulins' *Bible historiale* of the 1290s. A translation/adaptation of the Latin Vulgate and of Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, the *Bible historiale* survives in more than one hundred manuscripts, making it both the most popular Old French Bible text and one of the most reproduced vernacular texts of the late Middle Ages.[40] Following his source, who in turn draws on Josephus, Guyart includes in his account of Alexander's life the visit to Jerusalem and the enclosing of the ten tribes,

[38] Bigalli 1971. [39] Kinoshita 2016, 18, 62–3. [40] Patterson 2013.

not Gog and Magog. Beyond its importance as a witness to the wider transmission of Comestor's text, the *Bible historiale* may be understood as further assimilating Alexander to another understanding of Crusade that grew in importance in the decades after the fall of Jerusalem in 1187. As the unlikelihood of success in the Holy Land became apparent to Western leaders, Crusade impulses focussed on non-Christians closer to home. The legend of the ten tribes contributed to the demonisation of Jewish communities in Europe and to their portrayal as intimate enemies whose place was elsewhere, and who deserved expulsion or worse.

The literary assimilation of Alexander to other Crusader heroes or figures associated with Crusade continued in the early fourteenth century. Around 1300 appeared the *Entrée d'Espagne*, a Franco-Italian poem that recounts Roland's adventures in Spain and the Orient.[41] Early in the poem, Roland seizes the castle Noble and finds painted on the walls the adventures of Alexander the Great from childhood to death. Inspired by Alexander's example, Roland travels east and eventually arrives at the gates Alexander erected to enclose Gog and Magog. Thus Roland, himself a proto-Crusader and emblem of Christian-pagan conflict, becomes a second Alexander while the Macedonian becomes a precursor to and model for the French hero.

Around 1310 appeared the influential *Voeux du paon* (*Vows of the Peacock*) by Jacques de Longuyon, a poem that presents itself as an interpolation into *Roman d'Alexandre* but that also circulated independently.[42] This poem is of particular interest because it introduced the theme of the Nine Worthies, or nine greatest knights in history: three from the Old Testament (Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus), three from antiquity (Hector, Alexander, Julius Caesar) and three from the Christian era (Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon).[43] Among the many themes connecting these figures, one of the most significant is Crusade. Hector and Julius Caesar, in texts such as *Histoire ancienne* and *Faits des Romains* (*Deeds of the Romans*), are assimilated to the chivalric code and more specifically to Crusade history, like Alexander.[44] The Jewish Worthies were frequently presented in Crusade literature of all kinds as forefathers of and paragons for the Crusaders. Arthur and Charlemagne both fight

[41] Thomas 1913. [42] Bellon-Méguelle 2008.

[43] The idea of such a group long predates this poem, but it is particularly interesting to note that in his Crusade chronicle, one of the earliest, Ralph of Caen's eulogy of Baldwin compares him to David, Alexander and Charlemagne – a 'universal' grouping of three Worthies from the Old Testament, antiquity and the Christian era.

[44] Croizy-Naquet 1999, 31–2, 159–69.

pagans and defend the Church, and Godfrey of Bouillon was of course a leader of the First Crusade. The Nine Worthies can therefore be understood as articulating the *translatio* not only of chivalric virtue, but also of the crusading ethos from antiquity to the Middle Ages, and from East to West.

Viewed from the perspective of Crusade, the Nine Worthies theme is overdetermined and elegiac – imagination standing in for action in the wake of the fall of Acre in 1291. One may see a similar dynamic at work in the many Crusade treatises produced in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[45] These practical works offer suggestions for all dimensions of Crusade, from tactics to language training to colonial settlement. Alexander appears rarely in these, and when he does it is almost always to cite a historical fact about him rather than to evoke apocalyptic threats. Fidentius of Padua's treatise (1274, 1290–1) cites the *Secretum secretorum*, the apocryphal letter of Aristotle to Alexander, to urge leaders of Crusade armies to heed the philosopher's advice and be generous when capturing foreign cities. Pierre Dubois' treatise of 1306 compares the Tartar way of fighting to that of Alexander; speaking of the difficulties of uniting the world under one monarch, he notes that not even Alexander ruled all kingdoms. Dubois cites Roger Bacon's reference to Alexander's use of war machines as an example for Christian armies.[46] Roger de Stanegrave (1332) also cites the *Secretum* on the organisation of Alexander's army. Roger mentions too that the Tartars 'come from' Gog and Magog and have fought the caliph of Baghdad, a revealing combination of legend and history.

Many of the aforementioned works continued to be copied and translated throughout the fourteenth century, but no major new works depicting a Crusader Alexander were produced for several generations. Alexander certainly remained relevant to Crusade historiography and ideology in the era of the *arrière-croisades*, but it was only at the end of the Middle Ages, with the Burgundian revival of literary projects focussed on him, that new works tying Alexander to Crusade appeared. The first of these was *Les faicts et les conquestes d'Alexandre le Grand* (*The Deeds and Conquests of Alexander the Great*) of 1448 by Jehan Wauquelin, composed at the behest of Philip the Good (1396–1467), duke of Burgundy. This text is a compilation, translation and rewriting of numerous sources already mentioned, including *Historia de Preliis*, *Roman d'Alexandre* and *Voeux du paon*. It presents a blessed Alexander

[45] Leopold 2000; Paviot 2008. [46] Brandt 1956, 85, 122, 137 n. 69.

who prays to God for the enclosure of Gog and Magog; seeing that Alexander's desire is good, God fulfils his wish. Of particular note is the Christianisation of the scene of the Perilous Valley. When Alexander offers to stay behind and sacrifice himself so that his army might go free, Wauquelin cites the Gospels and describes Alexander as a 'good shepherd' protecting his 'flock'.[47] The text also makes clear that Alexander is saved from the valley's curse through prayer. Crusade was a crucial element of Burgundian political identity, as Philip's father, John the Fearless, had been captured at Nicopolis in 1396. It is worth noting too that six years after the composition of Wauquelin's work, Philip the Good staged the 'Voeu du faisan' (Vow of the Pheasant), an elaborately theatrical and ceremonial banquet at which he vowed to take the cross against the Turks. This event was largely modelled on *Vows of the Peacock*, and thereby associated Philip's vow with both Alexander's conquests and the memory of Philip's Crusader father.[48]

Philip's son Charles the Rash of Burgundy (1433–77) also commissioned an Alexander text. Vasco da Lucena's *Les faiz et conquestes d'Alexandre le Grant*, completed in 1468, bears the same title as Wauquelin's text but is in fact a translation of Quintus Curtius and other Latin historians, and is intended as a rationalist rejection of the romance tradition. In his prologue the author explains that his motivation is to demonstrate to Charles that Alexander was simply a man and yet was able to conquer the Orient, and that therefore Charles may aspire to the same success. As da Lucena says, Alexander is all the more compelling a model for ambitious Christian lords precisely because he did not require magic to conquer the East. Moreover, whereas the pagan Alexander brought only death and earned damnation, Charles would acquire eternal glory as a Crusader. Da Lucena thus brings Alexander back to earth by stripping him of the myth and fantasy that had accumulated around his biography in the centuries since his death. Yet even this humanised Alexander remained a potent reference for crusading ambitions.[49]

Manuscripts

Manuscripts are important sources for examining the ways in which Alexander was assimilated to Crusade in late medieval Europe because

[47] Hériché-Pradeau 2008, 168. [48] Moodey 2012, 125–48.
[49] On Wauquelin and da Lucena see Blondeau 2009.

they represent the material interpretation of the aforementioned texts. The study of manuscripts informs us about the socio-historical context of the transmission and reception of these works: about patrons and manuscript makers, the circumstances in which the texts were produced and read, and the ways in which readers responded to them. In this brief overview I focus on compilation and illumination, which are forms of textual interpretation. The juxtaposition and illustration of texts could frame them with, or interpolate into them, meanings not evident or intended. Compilation and illumination were techniques for supplementing, and in some cases recomposing or reorienting, already completed works, and could transform Alexander into a Crusade figure even if the text did not overtly depict him as such.

An early, pre-Crusade manuscript demonstrating Alexander's assimilation into salvation history and Christian eschatology is the *Beowulf* manuscript (British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A.XV) of circa 1000. Here the *Epistola* is compiled with a homily on St Christopher (a cynocephalus), the *Marvels of the East* (illustrated with wondrous beasts and deformed monsters), *Beowulf* and *Judith*, all in Old English. The manuscript is concerned with the struggle between civilisation and monstrosity, Christianity and the demonic.[50] Among other reasons, Alexander's letter is included because it confirms the existence of monsters and marvels and, like *Beowulf* and *Judith*, represents a hero who is able to overcome them.

In the Crusade era perhaps the earliest manuscript showing the insertion of Alexander into Crusade history is the *Liber floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer from circa 1120. Remarkably, the autograph copy of this manuscript survives, although not in its original form.[51] In this book the *Epistola* and *Collatio cum Dindimo* (correspondence between Alexander and the Brahmin Dindimus) are compiled with Fulcher of Chartres' Crusade chronicle, an abbreviated version of Pseudo-Methodius that mentions Gog and Magog, Adso's *De Antichristo*, a list of the fifteen signs announcing Judgement Day, and patristic *sententiae* on the Last Judgement and Resurrection, among other works. Its illustrations include an equestrian image of Alexander and map of Jerusalem. In its integration of texts and images of Alexander into Crusade historiography and eschatological prophecy, the *Liber floridus* announces many later manuscripts. It also

[50] Mittman and Kim 2013.

[51] Ghent, University Library, MS 92. Derolez 1998; Akbari 2009, 71–90.

had a long life – it survives in nine other copies produced between the twelfth century and 1512.[52]

Another notable early example of Alexander's assimilation to Crusade history is Brussels, KBR II 2208, a mid twelfth-century compilation of Solinus' *De mirabilis mundi* (*On the Wonders of the World*), *Vita Alexandri* (*Historia de Preliis*), the *Epistola*, the *Collatio cum Dindimo*, Fulcher of Chartres' chronicle, short texts on Alexander and a map of Jerusalem. This collection is on one level traditional, since Solinus and other Alexander texts had been compiled for at least a century before the Crusades. However, the inclusion of the Crusade chronicle and map indicates that readers were finding new meanings and relevance in Alexander material in the context of the Crusades. It is worth noting too that both the *Liber floridus* and KBR II 2208 were produced at monasteries with close ties to Franco-Flemish communities from which came Crusaders.[53]

Roman de toute chevalerie survives in five complete or fragmentary copies, all produced in England. Two of these are extensively illustrated and of particular importance because they demonstrate the ways in which the language of iconography assimilated Alexander into Crusade history. An obvious but nonetheless crucial point is that Alexander, his soldiers and his enemies are 'medievalised' in these and numerous other manuscripts: they are depicted wearing medieval armour and wielding medieval weapons, and are often endowed with coats of arms. This was of course typical of medieval art. Yet what modern viewers perceive as anachronism was, to medieval viewers, a perfectly logical sign of resemblance and continuity that complemented the textual evocation of chivalric, courtly and Christian values in Alexander's world. In these two manuscripts we also see how artists could insert details not included in the text. For example, in the earlier copy of circa 1250, the image in the left column on folio 28 v shows Alexander praying before a sacrificial fire for God's aid in enclosing Gog and Magog.[54] In the sky appears the haloed head of Christ, a detail not mentioned in the text. Immediately to the right is an image of two imprisoned demonic figures. The montage effect here transforms the textual narrative into an explicitly Christian one: Alexander prays to Christ, who enables him to overcome these damned peoples. In the later manuscript (1308–12), which preserves 311

[52] On these manuscripts and those that use material from the *Liber floridus*, see Derolez 1998, 185–90.

[53] Cruse 2011, 155–6.

[54] Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.9.34; see also Strickland 2003, 230.

miniatures, the artist has assigned many of the figures the coats of arms of contemporary nobles who participated in the Scottish campaign led by King Edward I.[55] Perhaps this manuscript was intended to imbue this war with epic and crusading overtones.[56] This book is also renowned for its extensive depictions of monstrous creatures and peoples, which make it a visual encyclopaedia for a laity curious about the East, as were many other manuscripts of Alexander material.[57]

The Old French *Prose Alexander* survives in sixteen complete or fragmentary copies, the majority of which contain no other texts, and eleven of which contain image cycles.[58] In these too we see examples of both medievalisation and visual reinvention that put Alexander's story into a Christian idiom. One manuscript shows a scene similar to that of Alexander praying in *Roman de toute chevalrie* described in the previous paragraph, only here Christ's face appears between the Trees of the Sun and the Moon.[59] In another copy the episode in which Alexander prays for an end to the storm in the desert is illustrated with a scene of Alexander and his men kneeling in prayer before an altar in the company of bishops.[60] In several manuscripts, bishops are shown officiating at Alexander's coronation and burial. It is tempting to see this Christianisation as simply the product of artistic practice, which relied primarily on stock formulas, and not about assimilating Alexander to militant Christianity. Yet in one exceptional manuscript made for King Philip VI of France in 1336, the *Prose Alexander* is compiled with a Crusade treatise and other texts related to Crusade and East-West relations.[61] We therefore cannot discount the possibility that the *Prose Alexander* in other copies was understood as a chapter in salvation history and a precursor to Crusade historiography.

Another Alexander corpus that merits mention for its connection to Crusade is the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, which survives in at least eighty-nine copies, thirty-six of which possess illustrations of the Alexander chapters.[62] Four of these were produced in Acre in the 1280s

[55] Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 24364. [56] Stone 2019, 106–28.

[57] Avril and Stirnemann 1987, 126–38. On the foreign 'races' depicted in such books see Strickland 2012.

[58] On this corpus see Pérez-Simon 2015.

[59] British Library, Royal 20 A V, 61r; see Pérez-Simon 2015, 472–3.

[60] Pérez-Simon 2015, 448. [61] British Library, Royal 19 D I; see Cruse 2015.

[62] See De Visser-Van Terwisga 1995/9; and www.medievalfrancophone.ac.uk/textual-traditions-and-segments/histoire/manuscripts-and-periods-of-production/ (accessed 4 February 2017).

and suggest the extent to which Alexander was incorporated into Crusade history and ideology. In one, Alexander receives tribute from the queen of the Amazons.[63] He is depicted as an enthroned Byzantine emperor and holds a staff mounted by a gold cross. The battle scenes in this manuscript draw directly on Crusade iconography: Alexander's soldiers are fully armoured and richly accoutred, while their enemies have dark skin, wear turbans, are unarmoured, use bows (which are dishonourable) and ride elephants.[64] Whatever their intentions, by employing traditional Byzantine and Western imagery, the makers of this and other copies of the *Histoire ancienne* depicted Alexander as a proto-Crusader and his enemies as infidels, even though the text disparages Alexander's violence and paganism. Also remarkable in the Acre manuscripts of the *Histoire ancienne* is how they embody the cultural synthesis between Western Europe and Byzantium that so marked the crusading era.

The *Roman d'Alexandre* survives in more than thirty complete or fragmentary copies; if one adds the manuscripts of *Vows of the Peacock* to this list, the number is more than sixty.[65] Like the text itself, these manuscripts integrate Alexander into Crusade history in a variety of ways. A copy from the 1280s produced in Tournai compiles *Roman d'Alexandre* with an extensive version of the *Crusade Cycle*, and thereby presents Alexander, Godfrey of Bouillon and other Crusaders as 'parallel lives'.[66] Another copy from circa 1300 produced in northern France combines *Roman d'Alexandre* and *La Chevalerie Judas Macchabé* (*The Chivalry of Judas Maccabeus*), again pairing Alexander with a warrior closely tied to Crusade historiography and mythology.[67] It is also worth noting that both Godfrey and Judas Maccabeus will join Alexander among the Nine Worthies. The most famous manuscript of *Roman d'Alexandre* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264), completed in Tournai in 1344, interpolates an Old French version of *Journey to Paradise* into the romance, and further assimilates Alexander to Crusade and eschatology by medievalising him and his men, illustrating his siege of Tyre and entry into Jerusalem, and depicting his enemies (including Gog and Magog) in the same manner as Muslims were represented.[68] More than any other corpus of Alexander texts, the

[63] British Library, Additional 15268, 203r. [64] For example 204r.
[65] On this corpus see Busby 2002: 278–328, and Leo 2013.
[66] Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 786. [67] Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 789.
[68] Cruse 2011.

Roman d'Alexandre manuscripts reflect Alexander's integration into the historical mythology of the Crusades.

The illustration of Wauquelin's *Deeds and Conquests of Alexander the Great*, which survives in at least five manuscripts, at times complements the text's account of Alexander's relationship with God. In one manuscript, the illustration of the Gog and Magog episode shows Alexander kneeling, his arms extended in an *orans* posture, and gazing towards the sky where a figure of God is depicted.[69] In the upper portion of the image we see masons building a brick wall and behind it a crowd of naked people who figure the cursed tribes. In another copy, Alexander is shown in gold armour kneeling before the rabbi of Jerusalem, who carries the tablets of the Law. In the background the onion-domed and hexagonal or octagonal Temple is clearly visible.[70] Vasco da Lucena's translation of Quintus Curtius survives in more than thirty copies, more than twenty of which are illustrated. Given this text's demythification of Alexander, it is not surprising that there are no attempts to Christianise Alexander in the miniatures. Moreover, in both the Wauquelin and da Lucena copies, there is a notable lack of Orientalising of foreign figures. This may suggest that the artists were not compelled to evoke ties to Crusade, perhaps because the dukes had other illustrated texts about Crusade in their library.[71]

Maps

Many medieval maps were not produced with the intention of showing precise spatial dimensions and locations, or enabling users to plan or follow routes across unknown terrain. Rather, maps are best understood as alternative depictions of the narratives and geographical concepts that undergirded the medieval world view. They were didactic, mnemonic, devotional and rhetorical devices that distilled centuries of intellectual tradition into unified visual fields combining text and image. Over the centuries, as trade, travel and warfare supplemented and transformed received wisdom, medieval maps changed too by assimilating new information. Yet cartography remained for centuries a conservative enterprise that bore the mark of the apocalypticism of the Crusade era.

69 Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 9342, 131v. Blondeau 2009, planche IV.
70 Paris, Petit Palais, ms Dutuit 456, 140v. Blondeau 2009, planche VII. 71 Moodey 2012.

One key to interpreting medieval maps is recognising their synthesis of geography and salvation history, whereby places on the map were analysed in light of past or future events and used to calculate where precisely in history the world stood. The Christian eschatological framework located the beginning of the apocalypse, and many of its battles, in the Holy Land and the East. As one of the principal sources of medieval European knowledge about the East, Alexander's legend was understood to be central to this divine plan, and therefore had a profound influence on medieval cartography for centuries. Alexander is overtly present, potentially referenced, or implied on numerous maps of the period. Most frequent are depictions of or references to Gog and Magog or, towards the end of the Middle Ages, the ten lost tribes. Other direct references to Alexander on medieval maps include the Trees of the Sun and the Moon, the 'arae Alexandri' (altars of Alexander), the 'arbor sicca' (dry tree), the Caspian Gates and Alexandria. Moreover, because of maps' mnemonic functions, any site, group, creature or phenomenon mentioned in the Alexander tradition and placed on a map could have evoked a recollection of the hero: Amazonia, Antioch, Babylon, Greece, India, Jerusalem, Macedonia, monstrous peoples, Paradise, the Valley of Jehosaphat, Syria, Tyre, etc.

Like the historiography, literature and manuscripts already discussed, medieval maps demonstrate Alexander's assimilation into a Christian eschatological framework well before the Crusade era. The Anglo-Saxon *mappa mundi* of 1025–50 identifies Alexandria, Antioch, Babylon, Gog and Magog (making their earliest appearance on a map), India, Jerusalem and Macedonia.[72] Directly below Gog and Magog one finds inscribed the words 'Turchi' (Turks) and 'griphorum gens' (gryphon people); the former will be a name used for Muslims during the Crusades and the latter may be a quotation of the Alexander romance's marvellous bestiary. The *mappa mundi* in Beatus of Liebana's *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* (*Commentary on the Apocalypse*) also identifies places (India, Jerusalem, Macedonia) and creatures (cannibals, dragons, gryphons) relatable to Alexander.[73] The *Liber floridus* shows that this Alexandrian geography was simply transported into the apocalyptic vision of the Crusade era. It contains a *mappa mundi* inscribed with lists of names of the peoples who

[72] British Library, Cotton Tiberius B V/1, 56v.

[73] See for example Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8878, 45bv–45t, produced before 1072.

inhabit each continent, with Amazons, cannibals, Arabs and Saracens inhabiting Asia.[74] The conflation here of material related to or drawn from the Alexander legend (recall that Alexander conquers the Amazons, and that Gog and Magog are described as cannibals) with Crusade terminology (Arabs, Saracens) shows how maps collapsed linear time into a mnemonic palimpsest in which different periods existed simultaneously. Another *mappa mundi* in the same manuscript, although very schematic, nonetheless identifies both Gog and Magog and India.[75] Alexander was thus already essential to medieval geographical knowledge before the Crusades began, and thereafter remained a fundamental reference because of the geography of his campaigns and his apocalyptic associations.

Many other notable maps affirm Alexander's influence on the apocalyptic geography of the Crusade era. The Sawley Map of circa 1190 contains a *mappa mundi* that identifies Macedonia, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Tyre, Antioch, Syria, Amazonia, cannibals, the Caspian Gates, Gog and Magog (described as 'unclean people') and Paradise, all of which may be directly related to Alexander's legend.[76] In his *Chronica Majora* (1250–9), Matthew Paris includes a map that identifies Jerusalem, the Valley of Jehosaphat (site of *Fuerre de Gadres*), Alexandria and Antioch.[77] The apocalyptic overtones of this map are evident in the caption next to Gog and Magog, which notes that 'From here came the people called Tartars'; as noted earlier, Matthew Paris, like many others, seems to have interpreted the Mongol invasions as the fulfilment of end-time prophecies. The famous Psalter Map of 1262–1300 identifies Macedonia, Jerusalem, Amazons, the Trees of the Sun and the Moon, the altars of Alexander and Babylon, and depicts numerous monstrous creatures.[78] Although the Psalter Map does not name Gog and Magog, it does possess an enclosed space where Gog and Magog are often found on other maps; an informed viewer would have recognised Alexander's handiwork in the Caspian Gates. Higden's *Polychronicon*, a vast encyclopaedia of circa 1342, includes a *mappa mundi* on which are identified many of these sites, and on which is noted that Alexander enclosed Gog and Magog.[79]

[74] Ghent, University Library, MS 92, 19r. See Derolez 1998, 49 on sources of these lists.
[75] Ghent, University Library, MS 92, 92v–93r. See Derolez 1998, 100–1.
[76] Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 66, Part 1.
[77] British Library, Royal 14 C VII, 4v. See Connolly 2009.
[78] British Library, Additional 28681, 9r.
[79] See for example British Library, Royal 14 C IX, 1v, of the late fourteenth century.

Two of the most famous and largest maps of the Middle Ages, the Ebstorf and Hereford *mappae mundi*, greatly expand the Alexander content and thus Alexander's role in salvation history in comparison with the aforementioned maps. The Ebstorf map, produced around 1239, contained more than fifty direct or indirect references to the Alexander legend.[80] These range from toponyms, to peoples (notably Gog and Magog, depicted eating human body parts behind a wall and endowed with a detailed caption that mentions Alexander and Antichrist), to marvellous and monstrous creatures (e.g. cynocephali).[81] A similar number of references, many with accompanying images as in the Ebstorf *mappa mundi*, are visible on the Hereford map of circa 1300.[82] The textual traditions for these maps differ, which indicates Alexander's presence in a wide range of ancient and medieval sources and his continued importance to encyclopaedic and apocalyptic geography into the late Middle Ages.

The Catalan Atlas of 1375 is another famous map on which Alexander figures prominently. Produced for King Charles V of France, it is likely the oldest surviving map to incorporate toponyms from Marco Polo's *Description of the World*. The map depicts Alexander next to Satan, with this explanatory caption:

> The Caspian Mountains, where Alexander . . . would have died . . . had not Satan come to his aid with his cunning, and with his art [Alexander] shut up the Tatars Gog and Magog . . . Likewise here he shut up various tribes who have no scruples about eating any kind of raw flesh. That is the nation from which the Antichrist will come forth.[83]

This caption conflates multiple interpretations of the Alexander legend: that he was aided not by God but by the devil (a common critique among writers in the Middle Ages), that the Tatars (Mongols) are equivalent to Gog and Magog, and that Antichrist will not only ally with these peoples but come from them. The Catalan Atlas is significant because it is poised between earlier medieval apocalyptic geography and late medieval rationalist cartography. The Alexander image and text reflect the atlas' conservatism, the Polo toponyms its innovativeness. Gog and Magog would continue to appear on world maps into the eighteenth century, although with diminishing frequency and based on the rationalist account of Marco

[80] The Ebstorf map is lost but known through photographs and reproductions.
[81] The Ebstorf map is searchable online at www2.leuphana.de/ebskart/ (accessed 8 February 2017).
[82] Westrem 2001. [83] Grosjean 1978, 86.

Polo, and would be pushed further and further beyond the boundaries of the known world.[84] This marginalisation of Gog and Magog reflects the epistemological transformations brought about by the age of exploration, even as it reminds us that religious fervour and apocalyptic fears remained ever present in the early modern era, and were just as crucial to colonialism as they had been to Crusade.[85]

Conclusion

The wealth of material in which Alexander is assimilated to Crusade testifies to his capacious and multifaceted role in medieval European thought. Indeed, Alexander's relationship to Crusade is worthy of a monograph in its own right. An expanded study of Alexander and Crusade would examine the ancient sources on Alexander and their reception in the Middle Ages, and the many geographical treatises and apocalyptic texts that mention Gog and Magog, the ten tribes and other sites and phenomena related to Alexander; would discuss Alexander texts in other languages; would discuss other manuscript compilations and miniatures; and would include many more maps. I hope nonetheless to have demonstrated that among the many uses to which Alexander's life was put in the European Middle Ages, 'thinking' the Crusades was among the most important. On the one hand, the Alexander of the Crusade era represented conquest and the potential to Westernise and Christianise foreign lands. On the other, and equally important, was his association with the protection of Europe and the establishment of strict boundaries between West and East, civilisation and barbarism. As we see in the figures of Gog and Magog in particular, Alexander's apotropaic power – his power to ward off evil – resonated deeply with medieval writers, artists and cartographers. It is true that warrior figures from the Old Testament and Christian period were more easily and frequently associated with the Crusades in late medieval Europe. Nonetheless, Alexander's embodiment of these contradictory impulses to simultaneously possess and reject foreign lands – a contradiction that was at the heart of the crusading project – makes him perhaps the truest symbol of the Crusade era.

[84] Gow 1998. [85] Goodman 1998.



Figure 8.1 Left: Alexander praying and Christ appearing in sky. Right: Gog and Magog imprisoned. Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.9.34, 28 v.



Figure 8.2 Alexander receiving the submission of the Amazonian queen. British Library, Additional 15268, 203 r.



Figure 8.3 Alexander's army takes and departs from Gaza. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, 42 v.



Figure 8.4 Sawley Map. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 66, Part 1

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9 The Slavic Alexander

SUSANA TORRES PRIETO

In the ancient city of Vladimir, about 170 kilometres north-west of Moscow, the prince Vsevolod III Iurevich, known by his sobriquet 'Big Nest' due to his extended progeny, built a church to honour St Dimitrius, his patron saint, around the year 1194. On the top part of the south wall, below the arches, three figures are depicted in bas relief. From right to left, there are images of Alexander the Great, followed by King David, and Jesus Christ at the farthest left. The first one depicts Alexander's apotheosis, his ascension into the heavens taken by two gryphons or similar creatures (see Figure 9.1).

About two hundred years later, in Bohemia, an anonymous poet decided to render the Latin hexameters of the *Alexandreis* of Gautier de Châtillon into rhymed octosyllable verses to create the first literary work in his vernacular language, Old Czech.

Some forty years later, around 1340, another anonymous writer, most probably a monk from the monastery of Dečani, when composing the life of the Serbian king Stefan Uroš III 'Dečanski', of the dynasty of the Nemanjas, who ruled from 1322 to 1331, compared his master and patron to Alexander of Macedonia when he described how, after defeating Mikhail III of Bulgaria in the Battle of Velbazhd (1330), he cried bitterly over the death of his enemy, just like Alexander had done over the deaths of Darius and Porus.[1]

About 150 years after that, a Russian monk from the northern Russian monastery of Kirillo-Belozerskii, whose name was probably Efrosin, was putting together a miscellany of heroic and epic tales, and in choosing what to include, besides *The Tale of Dracula*, *The Letter to Prester John* and the autochthonous *Zadonshina* (*The Tale of the Battle beyond the Don River*), he decided on a tale of the life of Alexander of Macedonia, despite the fact that the language of the text he was copying was slightly unfamiliar and there were certain passages he didn't understand, and that were not heroic, so sometimes he had to shorten what he had in front of his eyes.

[1] Koroleva 2014a, 99.



Figure 9.1 Bas relief of Alexander the Great (apotheosis) at the Church of St Dimitrius in the city of Vladimir

Between these four approximate moments, between these four hundred years and within a territory of approximately 1,000,000 square kilometres, the figure of Alexander the Great travelled and was adopted and adapted in a territory that was immersed in the process of ending being Slavic, in general, to become the languages and nations we can recognise today. There was, therefore, not one Slavic Alexander, as there was not a (Western) European one. This chapter presents a general survey of the various Alexanders found in this vast territory, focussing on the uses given to the Macedonian king in the different literary traditions, rather than on a detailed survey of all the manuscripts and versions within the Slavic realm that narrate parts or all of the story of Alexander the Great, and its many related medieval texts, which surpass by far the hundreds.[2]

The *Alexander Romance*, however, is the perfect case study to explain several relevant aspects of the emergence of Slavic literatures in the centuries immediately after the year AD 1000. The Slavs arrived and settled down

[2] Ample bibliography of editions and critical studies can be found in the bibliography section of volume III of the collective work under the direction of Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas (2014, 1861–7, 1955–68). W. F. Ryan and M. Taube have recently finished (2019) the annotated translation of the East Slavic version of the *Secret of Secrets*, accompanied by a thorough introductory study on the relevance and impact of this text in East Slavic literature.

in Europe around the fifth century of our common era. From the basin of the river Pripet in northern Poland they migrated south and east to establish themselves in all the areas of Central and Eastern Europe in which a Slavic language is spoken today. They were lucky enough to have an alphabet created for them *ex professo* with which they could render all the sounds of their Indo-European language. Since the Glagolitic script was unpractical and complicated, a much easier Cyrillic script was finally adopted to render Common Slavic, the language that was once common to all the members of this newly settled group. The Cyrillic had also the obvious advantage of resembling the Greek, a form of script familiar to the Slavs who either in the Balkans or near the Black Sea had entered into contact with the Byzantine Empire, with whom they traded and against – and sometimes alongside – whom they fought.[3] For those Slavs who remained in the original settlement area or did not move around much, the cultural and political influence did not come from Byzantium, but from the Holy Roman Empire, and soon, after a little bit of haggling, they fell under the influence of German bishops and the German emperor, and the Pope in Rome. They abandoned for the most part both the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic alphabets, which had been created to a certain extent for them, and agreed to use Latin as a language in their liturgy and Latin as an alphabet in their writing.[4]

This led to an early division of Slavs who still used a more or less common language into two differentiated cultural spheres, which corresponded to two confronted spheres of political influence and two Churches. Basically, the Slavs entered and expanded in Europe between the years 500 and 700, and they were thrown into the European internecine fights to decide whether the continent had to remain loyal to the now decrepit Roman Empire whose capital was Constantinople (known as Byzantium to us), or whether it should be put in the hands of the new powers that had emerged with Charlemagne. The outcome is clearly known. The Slavs were just caught in the middle of the dispute.

According to this early cultural split, specialists have traditionally divided the literary production of the following centuries, until vernacular traditions and the development of the printing press made a difference, into two areas, *Slavia Ortodossa* and *Slavia Romana*, labels intended to account for a myriad of cultural manifestations, from the use of a specific script to obedience to the Pope or Patriarch. Of course, such broad labels are always problematical

[3] The history of the creation and adoption of both scripts has been wonderfully summarised by R. Cleminson (2015, 55–6). For a longer survey see Schenker (1995).

[4] In Croatia and Bohemia a form of Glagolitic script called squared Glagolitic was also used by some monastic communities after the thirteenth century, but it was certainly not widespread.

because they necessarily iron out specific characteristics or traits and are difficult to apply broadly, and in particular in 'contact areas', like parts of the Balkans or Ruthenia, that are in the middle of such imagined borders.[5]

Nevertheless, for the study of the Slavic Alexander, as for the study of medieval Slavic literature in general, the relevant differences between these two broad cultural areas are two: first, from which languages literary works were being translated; and second, what was the approach adopted in two key aspects of transmission in manuscript culture – namely the perceived functionality and uses of the texts transmitted and the degree of innovation permitted.

The Slavic Alexanders derive from different source texts, and one possible approach to their study is their relation with the source text of the translation. In *Slavia Orthodoxa* (roughly encompassing the Orthodox Balkans and East Slavic territories before the emergence of Ukrainian, Russian and Belorussian as separate languages) translations were made from at least two different versions of the Greek text of Pseudo-Callisthenes known as the *Romance of Alexander*. In *Slavia Latina* translations were made from either the Middle High German text or, for the most part, from Latin. It is important to underline that in both cases the level of mutual intelligibility was quite high, particularly in the area of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. In this area the texts are in what we call 'Church Slavonic', the literary language used by Orthodox Slavs beyond the first narrow canon of Old Church Slavonic that was used before the thirteenth century. Church Slavonic was used as literary language, not exclusively for ecclesiastical purposes, before the emergence of literary vernaculars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This common Church Slavonic started to show evidences of various geographical variants (recensions) already in the late fourteenth century, but it is quite known that texts travelled easily between all these Orthodox lands and that, well into the fifteenth century, they were easily understood in all parts of *Slavia*

5 These terms, coined by Picchio (1972, 7–13), have been one of the most satisfactory attempts to take into account the similarities and differences among Slavs in the course of time before and after the Schism of 1054, from the Byzantine Commonwealth coined by D. Obolensky to the Cyrillo-Methodiana denomination of Central Europe. Picchio's division responded mainly to religious and cultural differences, focussing on liturgy and on the liturgical language (Greek or Latin) from which translations were mainly made, the idea being that, to a certain extent, the initial translating activity driven by the necessity of importing a certain liturgy in rite was also later extended to paraliturgical and non-liturgical texts, and that, therefore, the transposition of a cultural sphere or other to the newly converted Slavs created, de facto, more Orthodox or Catholic cultural paradigms. In an attempt to narrow it down even more to attested writing practices, and precisely to account for the contact areas in which such uniformity was not equally felt, at least diachronically, W. Veder (2006) coined the terms *Slavia Slavonica* and *Slavia Latina*, according to the means and procedures of textual transmission.

Orthodoxa. In *Slavia Latina* the situation was similar to other parts of Christian Western Europe: Latin was a liturgical language and was sometimes also used for literary purposes, but did eventually yield to the preference for the vernaculars in literary, not ecclesiastical, endeavours.

Alexander As Biblical Figure

If we go back to our first example of the Cathedral of St Dimitrius in Vladimir, the inclusion of Alexander in a bas-relief narration of the history of salvation provides us with the first adaptation of Alexander in the Slavic realm. The presence of Alexander together with King David and Jesus Christ not only tells us many things about the concept of Christianity that Prince Vsevolod had and what was his call in this world when he commissioned the building, but it also says a great deal about who Alexander the Great was for the East Slavs.

The first notice the people of Kievan Rus' had of Alexander the Great was as a precursor of the salutary message propagated by their newly adopted religion. In all likelihood, the first time they heard his name was as one of the characters in the apocalyptic text known as *Revelations of Methodius of Patara*, now known as the Pseudo-Methodius, in which Alexander encloses the unclean nations or peoples behind the northern mountains.[6] The relation between Alexander of Macedon and the apocalyptic text of Pseudo-Methodius is, of course, not exclusive to the Slavonic tradition, but it certainly played a decisive role in introducing the character of the Macedonian king in Slavic letters. It is difficult to assess when exactly the text of Pseudo-Methodius was available in Slavic. Specialists now agree that it was probably composed in Syriac and then translated into Greek, from which, in all likelihood, the translation into Slavic was made. If the text was translated into Greek around the early eighth century, a translation of it must have been already available by the time the *Russian Primary Chronicle* was composed in the twelfth century, since it mentions *Revelations* at least twice: once, more extensively, under the year 1096, and another time, in passing, in the year 1223. Russian specialists thought

[6] For a more detailed account of the relation between Alexander and the unclean nations see Torres Prieto 2019, Stoneman 2008, 170–85, and Garstad 2012, vii–xiv. The Greek text was edited by Aerts and Kortekaas (Aerts 1998). The Slavonic versions of *Revelations* were first published by Tikhonravov in 1863 (repr. 1973) and studied by Istrin (1897). More recently, D. Ostrowski (2014) has studied the identification of the unclean peoples in the context of the *Russian Primary Chronicle*.

the earliest translation of *Revelations* could also have been made in the twelfth century.

The Pseudo-Methodius text, which refers to Alexander in its chapter 8, was also later incorporated into some later version of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*, which absorbed, at some point, elements of the Methodian tradition and incorporated them into this protean narrative – specifically, the versions we now call λ, ε and γ, the latter a later combination of ε with an earlier β. Both λ and ε contain references to the Pseudo-Methodius tradition, but since ε is a further Christianised and epitomised version, datable to the end of the eighth century or beginning of the ninth, λ, usually dated to the early eighth century, is the first of the Pseudo-Callisthenian versions in which this apocalyptic role of Alexander is explicit.

Needless to say, the aforementioned reference in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* (*Povest' Vremennych Let* (PVL)) to Alexander the Great as he appears in the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius, even if this text is also later incorporated into the *Romance*, is not conclusive evidence to attest the arrival of the *Alexander Romance* to East Slavic letters as early as the mid twelfth century (tentative time of redaction of the first of the chronicle entires), but does offer some clues as to the possible interest this text raised among Kievan scribes.

The first translations into Slavic of the Pseudo-Callisthenes text might easily be traceable to the λ version, not only for the presence of these references, but also for the presence of other episodes, among them the descent in the diving bell and the flight into the air, theoretically the scene represented in the bas relief of the Cathedral of St Dimitrius in Vladimir. These two episodes are also present in the famous manuscript L of the β version, but this manuscript does not include the Pseudo-Methodian references.

The first translation of the *Alexander Romance* into Slavic has traditionally received the name of *khronograficheskaia* – that is chronographic. This label was given due to the fact that the earliest translations were included in chronographs, narrations of the history of the world, particularly from its biblical origins up to a more or less recognisable historical past: some go down to Byzantine times, others continue to the history of Russia. A *khronograph* is not a mere addition of historical sources in a more or less continuous narrative; it is actually a composite creation in which several texts, used as 'building blocks', are interwoven and reworked to create something that resembles a chronicle, but is not a year-per-year description of events. There were many *khronographies* in East Slavic letters, and in some of them the *Alexander Romance* (in Russian, *Aleksandriia*) played a prominent role, usually accompanied by Byzantine

historiographic texts such as the Chronicle of John Malalas or the chronicle of George the Monk (George Hamartolos). This inclusion of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* alongside parts of other chronicles in historical compendia (*khronography*) led nineteenth-century scholars to name this first adaptation of the *Romance* as *khronograficheskaia* – that is 'chronographic' – due to the type of historical compendia it which it was first found.[7] This denomination was used to distinguish it from later adaptations of other versions of the Pseudo-Callinthenes text made outside historiographic compendia in South and East Slavic.

The first translation of the *Alexander Romance* into Slavic is also a curious case of fluidity between literary generic boundaries. We know that both John Malalas (Book VIII) and George Hamartolos (Book I, chapters 17–26) used material from the Pseudo-Callisthenes text in the wording of their respective accounts about Alexander in their chronicles. Hamartolos, whose own ninth-century chronicle was heavily based on Malalas, is also responsible for introducing the episode of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem as he borrowed it from Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquity* (Book XI, chapter 8, § 304–46). In the Slavic tradition of the *Alexander Romance*, the earliest manuscripts of Slavic versions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes text also contain parts of translations of these two Byzantine chronicles, thus creating a unique textual unit of mirroring reflections. None of these historical narratives is attested in manuscripts earlier than the late thirteenth, maybe earlier fourteenth century. These chronographs were not translated as such, but most likely were composed, or interwoven, in Kievan scriptoria. Unlike other historiographic Byzantine texts, from which we have independent manuscript evidence without being part of a recomposed historical narrative, no manuscript survives of the *Alexander Romance* outside these historical compendia, although that does not invalidate the possibility of an independent translation before becoming part of one of these chronographs. It is a likely scenario, but one that cannot be proved. Linguistic analysis (presence of East Slavic features) seems to corroborate the preference of Kiev as a possible place for translation rather than any other part of the Slavic realm such as Bulgaria or Serbia.[8]

[7] There are currently three main editions of this text: the classical one made by Istrin (1893, 5–343) in several redactions, the one made by Tvorogov (1999, 85–178) within his edition of the Hellenic and Roman Chronicle, and the one made recently by Vilkul (2008, 2009a, 2010, 2011) from the manuscript of one of the oldest historical compendia (*Troitskii Khronograf*), which was published in several issues of the specialised journal *Palaeoslavica*.

[8] All the linguistic arguments, with a slight Russian slant, were summarised in E. Koroleva 2014b, 605–37.

As for the original Greek text that could have been used as source text, all the versions inserted in historiographic compendia in East Slavic were translations made from the β version, sometimes from the later L manuscript. It seems, according to the presence or absence of some episodes, that more than one translation was made over time. The text, however, contains some innovations that are somehow puzzling. Three main episodes contribute to the Christianisation of this Alexander: his visit to Jerusalem, his conversation with something similar to an angel or bird who tells him to conquer the earth and his closing of the impure peoples behind the Caspian Gates, the famous episode of Gog and Magog. The problem is that this version contains all these elements in ways that no other Greek version of the Alexander Romance has.

Firstly, the visit to Jerusalem is placed between chapters 33 and 34 of Book I – that is, between the oracle at the Serapion and his arrival to Egypt. Although Josephus mentions a visit to Jerusalem, the visit narrated in this version of the *Alexander Romance* does not match exactly Josephus' text either. A similar interpolation with a biblical city as protagonist will take place in the Greek version between Book II.17 and Book II.18, where a short text relates Alexander's visit to Babylon. Secondly, the episode of Alexander flying into the skies occurs immediately after the episode the water of life and is slightly modified. In Slavic, the birds with human form and face, speaking in Greek, order him to attack Porus. Finally, the episode of the enclosed peoples is referred to immediately after Book II, chapter 23, in the Greek version.

The first Slavic translation was included in the earliest versions of several 'khronographies' recounting world history from different sources, mainly collected from the Byzantine chronicle of Malalas and Hamartolos. In our versions the incipit of Malalas itself is substituted with the Tale of Saint Epiphanius of how God created the world in twenty-two acts (tasks) and in six days; ample sections of Book I are rewritten by copying word for word the text of Genesis (Gen. 5, 6 and 7), which deal with the lineage of Abraham and the Deluge of Noah. Different sections, particularly on the history of Greek gods, are seriously abridged from the Malalas text (1.10–1.18) to the point that some of Malalas' books turn almost into chapters or paragraphs. Clearly the scribe had no interest in and no knowledge of Greek mythology, instead of which he introduces shortly after Malalas' Book 6 the book of Daniel, including the deuterocanonical chapters on Susanna and Bel and the dragon. And this goes on until the end of Book 7 of Malalas. And then Book 8 should have started, according to Malalas, but it does not, because Book 8 is the one devoted to the Kingdom of the

Macedonians, and the scribe decided to change this for the Pseudo-Callisthenian *Alexander Romance*.

It remains a mystery as to why the scribe decided to include the text of the *Alexander Romance* right there. Both of the aforementioned chronicles had sections on Alexander the Great, and, most likely, if the inclusion had been made in a Byzantine compendium translated in blocks into Slavic, the difference in language, let alone in genre literary conventions, probably could not have gone unnoticed: to a Greek-speaking scribe/writer, the difference in language between the high style of the chronicles and the popular Greek of the *Romance* would have been crystal clear, a nuance probably lost in translation. Most likely, the innovation was made in Slavic: the scribe decided to use the Pseudo-Callisthenes text just as he had decided to use the Bible before, to fill in the gaps of what he wanted to say with a better text. This could maybe favour the idea that there must have been a translation of the *Alexander Romance* into Slavic, separated from the historical compendia we have now, and used as an independent source, as a building block, to incorporate it into the historical narrative. If that was the case, we cannot know because there is no manuscript to attest it. In any case, there is something unique about this first Slavic version: the first Pseudo-Methodian interpolation occurs in Book II, after chapter 23, which is not the usual place in the *Alexander Romance* versions that contain references to *Revelations*, usually in Book III.[9] Moreover, the wording of this specific interpolation is very close to the reference in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* under the year 1096, as Tvorogov (1999, vol. 2, 166–7) noted in his edition. He also noticed that the redaction of the text from *Revelations* that had been copied after the *Alexander Romance* in the second redaction of one of these historical compendia, the *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle*, was close to some of the translations made into East Slavic of the apocalyptic text of Pseudo-Methodius. The close relation in Slavic of the text of the *Alexander Romance* with the apocalyptic vision of Pseudo-Methodius and its introduction in Slavic literary culture as a biblical figure linked to the salvation of Christianity would justify more clearly his inclusion in the iconography of salvation in the Cathedral of St Dimitrius in Vladimir as well as the use of the Pseudo-Callisthenian text as a long interpolation to praise the life and deeds of

[9] The edition of the Greek λ version was made by H. Van Thiel in 1959. It differed substantially from the L manuscript of the β version in the contents from Book III, chapter 17 onwards. The best analysis so far of both versions, among others, is found in Jouanno 2002, 247–303 (version β) and 305–38 (version λ).

the monarch responsible for enclosing the unclean peoples. In this sense, the Slavic scribe probably used the *Alexander Romance* as functionally equivalent as he has previously used books of the Hebrew Bible, probably due to the limited space dedicated by either Malalas or Hamartolos to a character who clearly epitomised for him the personification of a pagan monarch who nevertheless can 'become' Christian and be decisive in the teleological history of the Christian *oikoumene*. Alexander provided the best possible precedent to a recently converted ruling dynasty in the idea that it was possible for formerly pagan monarchs to occupy a relevant place in Christian history.[10]

Alexander As Model for Princes

Our second Alexander is a completely different story and a most remarkable one, because the king of Macedonia, the conqueror of the world, is going to be the protagonist of the first literary work of one the most prolific Slavic literatures ever, the Czech tradition, and also because it is the only historiographic tradition of the life of Alexander of Macedon in Slavic.

Alexander was not completely unknown in the Bohemian court. In fact, he was used most profusely in order to create a princely model for the Bohemian dynasty in various ways.[11] The Bohemian court of the Přemysl dynasty had witnessed the composition in Middle High German of Ulrich von Etzenbach's *Alexander* between the years 1270 and 1287, the last years of the rule of Ottokar II (1253–78). This adaptation in Middle High German of Gautier de Châtillon's Latin poem in hexameters was dedicated to the new king, Wenceslas II of the aforementioned dynasty.

In the last years of the thirteenth century or the first years of the next, an anonymous poet decided to attempt a similar feat by trying to render Châtillon's *Alexandreis* into Old Czech. It was certainly daring because his listeners/readers most likely knew and certainly had access to both the Latin original and the German adaptation by von Etzenbach. In comparison to the 5,500 verses of Châtillon's work or the 28,000 verses of

[10] Aside from the excellent analysis by M. de Jong (McKitterick 2001, 131–64) on the main characteristics of medieval accounts of conversion to Christianity of barbarian kings, Vodolazkin (2000, 37–40) has dealt with the importance of translations of world history in early Rus' in order to make sense and justify to a certain extent their previous pagan history.

[11] The uses of the figure of Alexander in Bohemian political propaganda have been brilliantly analysed by Éloïse Adde-Vomáčka in the collective work under the direction of Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas (Adde-Vomačka 2014, 1165–81).



Figure 9.2 Alexander arrives to Jerusalem. Illustrated Chronicle of Tsar Ivan IV (Litsevoi letopisnii svod), second half of the sixteenth century, f. 613 v. Library of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg

Etzenbach's, the anonymous Czech poet's endeavour was far more modest. Only 3,363 verses (3,992 if we count the repetitions) have survived dispersed in nine fragments dated to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[12] Clearly his main source was Châtillon, though he would also have had access to the German version by Etzenbach, who had incorporated parts of Leo of Naples' *Historia de Preliis* (J^{2}). There may be no need to suppose that the author also had access to the later attested translation into Czech of Leo of Naples' work, which seems to be in the version J^{3}. It is unlikely,

[12] The edition still used is Vážný 1947.

though, that, despite the similarity of certain passages, this was a direct translation of Châtillon's: it is rather a version, an adaptation.

From all the fragments, whose dating is tentative in the absence of any colophon, the longest (Svatovítský (2460 v.) f. 157 v.–f.169 v.) is actually dated to the fifteenth century and bears the title *Alexander Bohemicalis*. The disposition of the manuscript contains 50 octosyllabic rhymed verses per column and two columns per page. It is divided into books and within them, with rubrics, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in Old Czech, sometimes in both. It corresponds to Books I–IV of Châtillon's text. It finishes after the burial of Darius' wife. The second longest fragment contains 492 verses (Jindřichohradecký) and can be confidently dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. It corresponds to parts of Books II and III of Châtillon's text. The other two longer ones (Budějovický and Budějovicko-musejní) are also unbound folia, like the preceding one, and slightly earlier, both dated to the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The first one has rubrics in Old Czech and corresponds to parts of Books IV, V and VI of Châtillon's work. The second one, in parchment, includes parts of Books VI and VII. The rest of the fragments, all from the fourteenth century, contain around 100 verses each, and get as far as the death of Alexander. Some of them are repetitions of other fragments. There are references to a prose version created later based on this versified one, but we do not have a manuscript of it and it seems not to have had the same impact.

Three main facts make this Czech version unique. As mentioned before, it is the only rendering in Slavic of an Alexander as it was depicted in antique historiography, since Gautier de Châtillon's *Alexandreis* was based on Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni*; secondly, it contributed to the creation in Czech of the octosyllabic verse as a form of high poetry, and throughout the fourteenth century its expansion in the newly born vernacular Czech literary tradition is considerable; thirdly, Alexander is used here, but not for the first time, as a *speculum principis* in a tradition that would be continued by further translations into German and Czech, such as Leo of Naples' work, and other versions into Polish and Belorussian. Indeed, the Czech poet focusses particularly on the advice Aristotle gave to Alexander about the need for humility and elaborates extensively on the issue of treason. Of course, since we only have fragmentary evidence of the poem, it is difficult to evaluate whether he favoured these topics over others, or whether it is the text containing these topics which has survived. It has been argued, however, that this Czech version tried to promote the agenda of the nobility, rather than the absolute ruler's, and that this Alexander is depicted more as a *primus inter pares* than as an

absolute emperor or prince. In support of this theory is not only Alexander's disposition to listen to the advice of his master, but also the fact that Alexander seems to take most of his decisions by consensus with his own generals.[13] It seems, from an overall impression, that the poet had a high degree of freedom in composing, so he was not merely a translator (episodes clearly abridged or directly suppressed are combined with long expanded ones) and that he was highly realistic and critical of his contemporary society.

The anonymous poet of the Old Czech *Alexandriada* knew exactly what he wanted to say, and he said it. He presents a fully Christianised Alexander whose birth is left without question (Nectanebo is not even mentioned in this poem), who is crowned in a ceremony similar to the ones familiar to his audience, who is victorious in his campaigns against Athens and the Persians because he has God on his side – in short, he creates a fully Christian prince out of a legendary figure of antiquity. This Alexander does not enclose impure peoples or become Christian after speaking with the elders in Jerusalem because he is already a Christian prince. In this sense the level of adaptation is extraordinary because it is really a new, original Alexander. As a model for princes, he does not have to link himself to a history of Christian salvation for humanity to deserve a place in high literature.

This literary feat was not, however, the only rendering of the life of Alexander of Macedon in Bohemia. Shortly after (end of the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth), another version of Alexander (*Historie Alexandra Velikého*) was circulated in Bohemia. This was a direct translation of Leo of Naples' *Historia de Preliis* (J^3). It comprised 6,120 fifteen-syllable verses without a rhyme ('political') and its popularity is well attested by the five extant manuscripts that have reached us accounting for as many variants. This translation, close to its Latin source text to the point of not being comprehensible in parts, depicts Alexander as an adventurer, a conqueror, but also as a great example of a lecturing tale: after years of power and adventures, he would become a pious and modest man, a moralising example of Christian virtues. It is dated to the end of the fourteenth century thanks to a colophon in one of the manuscripts, though of course we cannot know if earlier manuscripts also circulated. From the same tradition (Leo of Naples'), the first Polish translation was made as late as 1550 (*Historyja Aleksandra Wielkiego*).

13 Adde-Vomačka 2014, 1172–5.

These two depictions of Alexander seem to have coexisted in Bohemia, together with old and new translations into German, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Written in two different styles of language – a more formal one (in octosyllabic verses) and a more colloquial one for the greater public (in fifteen-syllable verses) – Alexander was from the beginning a literary character rather than a historical or biblical one, not only due to the sources through which his story was known, which, at the end, pretended to be more historiographic, but, more importantly, because he served different purposes when he was borrowed, either as a model for princes or as an exemplary novel character.

Besides these two *Alexandriads* in Old Czech, translations were made of the *Secreta Secretorum*, of the *Liber de vita et moribus philosophorum* attributed to a Pseudo-Walter Burley, where a whole original section on Alexander was inserted (1350–70), and, continuing with the tradition of a bilingual court as inaugurated by Ulrich von Etzenbach, it is likely that the *Alexander* of Seifrit (1352) was also composed for the king of Bohemia and future emperor Charles IV.

The engagement, therefore, of the Přemysl dynasty first and of the kings of the house of Luxenbourg later with the figure of Alexander of Macedon, seems to have been quite fruitful and everlasting, taking into account that most of these works of what some specialists have wanted to call 'the Czech cycle' of the *Alexander Romance* were commissioned by the monarchs themselves.[14] It is hardly surprising, then, that a work entitled *The Privilege of Alexander the Great to the Slavs* (*Zápis Alexandra Velikého Slovanům*) (*c.*1360) would see the light in this environment, provided the good press the Macedonian emperor enjoyed in this part of the world.[15] This document, written in Latin during the reign of Charles IV (1346–78) and presented as an official privilege signed by Alexander of Macedon, granted the Slavs, his loyal and courageous allies, the right to inhabit the territory from the northern frontier of Italy to the end of the world. This *falsum*, quickly identified as such by Piccolomini in his *Historia Bohemica*, enjoyed wide distribution for almost a century and even reached Polish lands in a translation Marcin Bielski inserted in his *Kronika wszystkiego świata* (*Chronicle of the Entire World*) in 1551, which would eventually be translated into Russian in 1584. Of course, its composition responds to an anti-Habsburg reaction by Charles IV in a time when he was trying to affirm the independence of the Bohemian kingdom from its German neighbours (this is also the time when the Slavic church rite will be

[14] Hashemi-Kopecka 2006, 644–9. [15] Adde-Vomáčka 2014, 1170, 1180–1.

reinstated in Bohemia with his foundation of the Monastery of the Slavs), but what might be more surprising, perhaps, is the choice of Alexander as a sanctioning authority due to his undeniable role as model for princes and emperors.

Alexander As Literary Hero

The last two 'moments' proposed at the beginning of this chapter have much in common, but more importantly they have in common the adoption of Alexander as a heroic figure, as a literary character. This adoption of Alexander as a literary character was probably behind the translations made in the Balkans and the South Slavic territories from the beginning. The Dalmatian coast of Croatia was undoubtedly one of the most prolific centres in producing Slavic translations of Latin originals, as well as, very likely, of knightly romances composed in France and England. In a book inventory found in the city of Zadar dated to 1389, there is notice of various romances, among which is found 'unus liber Alexandri parvus in littera sclava'.

On the other hand, translations of the Greek text of Pseudo-Callisthenes are found from Wallachia to Moscow. Across the Balkans alone, including Wallachia, we have been able to trace down forty manuscripts, and more than three hundred manuscript copies of the *Alexander Romance* have survived in East Slavic.[16] What is the difference between this text and the one Prince Vsevolod had available? Very little, actually, despite having been called by different names for more than one century of scholarly endeavour. Both derive from the Pseudo-Callisthenian text, both include more or less the same episodes and both were probably, in origin, translated as independent works from versions created in Greek between the eighth (from λ) and the ninth centuries (from ε or ζ), both of them deriving from the Greek fifth-century β version.

This ζ version has been proposed lately as a possible Greek version behind the translation found in Serbian. This assumption is based on the fact that there is a Middle Greek version which presents clear mistakes that could only be due to a retroversion from Slavic into Greek, and the fact that the Serbian version is also somehow particular. Some scholars therefore propose a common prototype, ζ*, now lost, itself based upon ε, written in

16 Several editions of some of these versions are now available: Serbian (Novaković 1878, Marinković 1986, Christians 1991 and Van den Berk 1970), Russian (Botvinnik et al. 1965), Bulgarian (Köhler 1973), Ukrainian (Gaevskii 1929) and Croatian (Jagić 1871).

Middle Greek, that was the origin of the Serbian translation, maybe also of a Russian one. From this Serbian translation a retranslation would have been subsequently made into Middle Greek, due to the mistakes found in it.[17]

The Serbian version is basically much more novelistic than the previous text. It presents, aside from all the wonders Alexander discovers in his travels, a more detailed account of Aristotle's teachings, a more humanised Alexander, who cries bitterly when he finds out he has killed his own father, Nectanebo, or a more dramatic Roxana who decides to kill herself when Alexander dies. It is full of Christian and Jewish elements, such as the presence of the prophet Jeremiah in Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, and, all in all, it resembles more the structure of a novel than the Alexander depicted in the historical compendia.

By the time the Serbian monk used Alexander as the other term of the comparison with his ruler, it was certainly because the figure of Alexander was sufficiently known and respected to use it in this context. Bearing in mind that the comparison is made in the mid fourteenth century, it is not completely far-fetched to propose at least a century earlier when the first copies of the *Romance* were made. Similarly, by the time Efrosin decided Alexander was a literary character, along with Prester John, it was also probably due to the fact that Russia had established its place in the history of salvation of humankind firmly enough to require ancient figures to do so.

The denomination of this second translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes as Serbian has more to do with the history of scholarly literature on the subject than with any particular linguistic ascription of the text. By the time the great Russian scholar V. M. Istrin described the *Alexander Romance* as he found it in East Slavic historical compendia in 1893, another great specialist on Slavic studies, V. Jagić, had published in Zagreb in 1871 a text he called *The Life of Alexander the Great* (*Život Aleksandra Velikoga*) in which he edited a seventeenth-century Church Slavonic (Serbian recension) manuscript, and Novaković (1878) had also made the first serious study of the *Alexander Romance* in Slavic. Both acknowledged Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian and Russian recensions of this version, and Jagić admitted the translation was probably made 'somewhere in the South' either in Bulgarian or Serbian lands, but into Church Slavonic, the literary language they had in common. Jagić was

[17] A complete survey of this possibility, with arguments in favour and against, can be found in the recension that Mario Capaldo made of Marinković's and Van den Berk's books (Capaldo 1973–4).

Croatian. Novaković was Serbian. We have manuscripts of this text in all the aforementioned recensions, and little evidence to prove that one version was made before or after others. Istrin used the term 'Serbian' in view of the editions available at the time he was writing. Calling the second translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes 'Serbian' is a convention as much as calling the first one 'chronographic'. They both come from the same Greek source, if maybe from two different versions, the only differences being (1) that it was edited differently, and (2) that the recension might have had different intermediate stages via other South Slavic languages. This means that all the Alexanders known in *Slavia Orthodoxa*, those territories that kept the Cyrillic script and took texts mainly, almost exclusively, from Greek, only knew about Alexander as Pseudo-Callisthenes and all his continuators presented him.

The Cyrillic Slavic Alexander, therefore, is from the beginning a legendary one, if we consider the Greek source text from which it was translated, different from the Alexander of Latin historiographic sources adapted in Bohemia much later. It is important to underline that is the same original text, the *Alexander Romance* of Pseudo-Callisthenes, that will be again translated or adapted later on in Serbia and that will reach again the Eastern Slavs, and that will be considered a work of heroic literature. The paradox, of course, is that when they most badly needed a fully Christian Alexander, they only had available a Hellenistic pagan one, and had to supplement the text from other sources. When they finally get a fully Christian and more moral Alexander, a later Byzantine version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, they don't need him as a Christian figure anymore. To a certain extent, it is a parallel situation to that in Bohemia, where an original Alexander would inaugurate Czech letters, so Alexander was useful for that, but, due to his high language and morals, this Alexander was soon abandoned in favour of a more popular, colloquial Alexander, as Leo of Naples presented him, whose public wanted to hear more about faraway lands. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the first one barely survives in fragments and from the other we have at least five full manuscripts.

So, Alexander, malleable as he always is, managed to serve the incipient literary traditions in Slavic languages well, allowing them to create the character they most needed at a certain given time. Bearing in mind that the Slavs did not have ancient literature and that they never were in touch with classical literature in the making nor were part of the Roman Empire, let alone the Macedonian, the resilience and capacity of the Macedonian king to catch their imagination, in all his guises, was certainly phenomenal.

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10 Alexander the Great in Byzantine Tradition, AD 330–1453

ANTHONY KALDELLIS

The Byzantines had better access to the ancient sources regarding Alexander in their original language than any other post-classical readers before the advent of modern scholarship. It is to their copyists that we owe the survival of the ancient historical-biographical tradition and of the earliest versions of the *Alexander Romance*, from which all the rest sprung. Had they wished to, the Byzantines could have claimed the Conqueror as a part of their own national or cultural genealogy, seeing as they were Greek speakers and claimed Greece and Macedonia as territories of their empire, even if there were periods during which actual control of those lands was tenuous. But their relationship to Alexander did not work out that way. In religion, the Byzantines were Orthodox Christians and generally condemned all aspects of paganism, which they labelled 'Hellenism' since the fourth century. This created an ineluctable difference between themselves and ancient Greece.[1] In terms of religious history, they identified more with the Jews who were part of the Persian kingdom that Alexander overthrew than with the Macedonians who conquered it. Moreover, in political or national terms the Byzantines identified as Romans, and so they traced their history back to Augustus and from him to Romulus. This placed Alexander always somewhat to the side of most Byzantine cultural genealogies.

Nevertheless, as this chapter shows, Alexander proved to be a versatile and adaptable figure in Byzantium, just as he was in other medieval cultures. Although he was always perceived as a Greek, he managed to elbow himself into the ranks of the Roman emperors, at least on a symbolic level. And even though he was historically what the Byzantines would have considered a pagan, he nudged his way into accounts of sacred history and even claimed a role in popular eschatological narratives as a kind of proto-Christian emperor. Alexander thus accomplished a feat no other figure in the Byzantine imagination did: he transcended his Greek origins to acquire additional Roman and Christian personae to wear, in the appropriate

[1] Kaldellis 2007. For previous treatments of Alexander in Byzantium see Pfister 1960; Gleixner 1961; Aerts 1988; Jouanno 2002.

specific contexts of course. This may be illustrated by the provincial tales regarding the frontiersman Digenis Akritis, versions of which perhaps began to be written down circa 1100. In one version the poet dismisses the 'false myths of Homer' regarding Achilles and Hector, but upholds the 'mighty' Alexander of Macedonia who, with God as his helper, became the Master of the World (*kosmokrator*), a word the Byzantines also used for their emperors. Digenes later mates with Maximou, a descendant of the Amazons whom Alexander brought back from the Brahmans, and he builds a palace by the Euphrates, on the ceiling of which he paints scenes of the heroes of old, including Samson, David, Achilles, Moses and Alexander, specifically the defeat of Darius, the palace of Kandake and the journey to the Brahmans.[2]

Five Alexander Memes . . .

The Byzantine Alexander was a composite in various combinations of five elements stemming from different kinds of sources and traditions. I present the five roughly in chronological order, and then survey their use, modulations and combinations in the Conqueror's individual appearances in Byzantine literature. The diverse origins of his cultural DNA made for a composite figure that straddled the ancient Greek, imperial Roman, biblical and fantastical worlds.

The first was the Alexander of historical and biographical tradition, especially of Arrian and Plutarch. As mentioned, the Byzantines had better access to this Alexander than did any other post-classical readers before the Renaissance. This was true in terms of both quality (being able to read the best sources in the original language) and quantity. Some Byzantine scholars even had access to primary sources that are lost today. For his *Bibliotheca* (*Myriobiblon*), the ninth-century patriarch Photios read and wrote reviews of the following ancient historians who covered Alexander: Theopompos of Chios' *Philippika* (cod. 176 = *BNJ* 115), evidently also known to the editors of the *Souda* in the late tenth century; Amyntianos' biography *Alexander* (cod. 131 = *BNJ* 150); Kephalion's *Chronography* (cod. 58 = *BNJ* 93), which went down to and included Alexander (it has an entry in the *Souda* and was likely known by the twelfth-century scholar

[2] *Digenes Akritis* G 4.27–31, 6.385–6, 7.61–100. For the possible influence of the *Alexander Romance* on *Digenes*, see Beaton 1996, 46, focussing on the death scene.

Ioannes Tzetzes); Agatharchides of Knidos (cod. 213 = *BNJ* 86); and Memnon's *History of Herakleia* (cod. 224 = *BNJ* 434).

In his review of Theopompos, Photios reveals that he also had access to Douris of Samos (*BNJ* 76), who also possibly survived down to the twelfth century. The sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 led to the destruction of much ancient literature, possibly of these historians too, but lack of interest on the part of Byzantine patrons and copyists may have also led to an author lapsing. It is impossible to know exactly how late an author survived in Byzantium, for a work may have survived without leaving any explicit attestations in later writers; conversely, such late attestations may have been recycled at second-hand long after a work had been lost. Judging from their last attestations, Aristoboulos (*BNJ* 139), Hieronymos of Kardia (*FGrH* 154) and Onesikritos (*BNJ* 134) probably did not make it out of antiquity. Others who may have survived down to the middle Byzantine period include Anaximenes of Lampsakos (*BNJ* 72) and Marsyas of Pella (*FGrH* 135–6). In short, Byzantine scholars had access to more literary sources about Alexander, for all that they lacked interest in writing a critical synthetic account of his reign.

The second Alexander was the one who visited Jerusalem according to the (apocryphal) report in Josephos' *Jewish Antiquities* 11.4–6.317–345.[3] Byzantine readers did not just happen to find this report there. The Byzantines preserved Josephos precisely because he provided a biblically oriented (if Jewish) commentary on ancient history, rebutting pagan polemics and integrating classical history into its Jewish counterpart. His partially interpolated passage about Jesus – the infamous *Testimonium Flavianum* – and Alexander's visit to Jerusalem were points of attraction for Byzantine readers.[4] The Jerusalem visit could be slotted into an otherwise historical narrative of Alexander's life, and represented the first and more important point of contact between the Greek and biblical historical traditions, both of which were of interest to Byzantine readers.

The third Alexander was the fantasy figure of the *Romance*. The original Hellenistic version of Pseudo-Callisthenes spawned a number of Byzantine variations, which have been magisterially and individually studied by Corinne Jouanno.[5] Generic references in Byzantine literature to Alexander's heroic qualities may therefore allude either to the historical-biographical figure or to the *Romance* version (or both), but some episodes, such as the hero's capture by queen Kandake, can be identified as stemming

[3] For a survey of this tradition, see Jouanno 2002, 378–81. [4] Kaldellis 2012.
[5] Jouanno 2002.

from the *Romance* even when they are presented as ostensibly historical. Byzantine scholars could combine elements of these two Alexanders in order to present a fuller picture. For example, Tzetzes does this concerning Alexander's physical appearance, noting that what we would call the *Romance* version 'is celebrated among all people', while presenting the information he has taken from Plutarch as a more learned supplement to the former.[6] Interestingly, Tzetzes is also the first person on record to attribute the *Romance* to Callisthenes.[7]

Fourth was Alexander as a proto-founder of Constantinople and prototype for the Byzantine emperors. This tradition appears for the first time in the chronicle of Ioannes Malalas (sixth century), a work that survives only in a later abridgment and offers numerous fantastic versions of myth and history, going so far as to cite invented sources and traditions. Malalas begins his account of Alexander's career by saying that the king went to 'Byzoupolis' – that is Byzantion – before crossing over to Asia. Alexander named the place where he drilled his army the 'Strategion', which was later one of Constantinople's public places. In this way he is presented as a proto-founder of New Rome. Moreover, his conquest of the Persian empire is described as 'freeing the cities and territories of the Romans . . . and restoring to the Romans all that they had lost'. Alexander is thus anachronistically presented as a proto-Byzantine emperor, freeing the East from Oriental oppression.[8] Malalas' source for this narrative may have been a city chronicle of Constantinople or *Patria*-style text (a late antique genre that presented the origins of a city and its monuments, here the Strategion), or the enigmatic historian Bottios, whom Malalas cites by name in this passage.[9]

Alexander is associated with the Strategion also in the *Parastaseis*, a dossier of mythistorical information on the statues of Constantinople that dates possibly to the eighth century. This text mentions a tripod in the Strategion that was associated via an inscription with Alexander, and says that the Strategion was where Constantine set up the first forum of his city. This establishes Alexander as a kind of proto-Constantine and pre-founder of Constantinople. Finally, the tenth-century *Patria of Constantinople* combines the information in Malalas and the *Parastaseis*, albeit introducing its own variations, featuring a statue of Alexander on a tall column that Constantine allegedly moved to the Strategion. The two rulers are thus

6 Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 11.368 (p. 434).
7 Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 1.13 (p. 15), 3.111 (p. 120) and other places.
8 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.1; the Strategion aetiology is repeated at 12.20.
9 For Malalas' sources see Jeffreys 1990; Garstad 2016.

linked again.[10] Still, Alexander had a tiny presence in Constantinople's monumental architecture. Apart from the dubious case of the Strategion, there was only a statue of him in the hippodrome, known through an allusion in an epigram on another statue there (the place was crammed full of ancient statuary).[11]

Finally, the fifth Alexander originated in the apocalyptic imagination and its biblical roots. The prophesies in the book of Daniel (second century BC) referred transparently to Alexander under the guise of the 'the fourth king' (11:2–4) who would arise to displace the Persians before his own kingdom broke into pieces. In the early Byzantine period Theodoretos of Kyrrhos (among other theologians) wrote a long commentary on Daniel that drew out the allusions to the historical Alexander.[12] Later, especially in the ninth and tenth centuries, the prophetic persona of Daniel was used as a mouthpiece for further apocalyptic texts.[13] But a key development had taken place in the meantime, specifically at the end of the seventh century, that is in the immediate aftermath of the Arab conquests: Alexander had been cast as a major figure in a new prophesy about the end times attributed to the early Christian writer Methodios. The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodios was written in Syriac and drew on earlier Syriac traditions, but was soon translated into Greek and then Latin and became one of the most popular texts of the Middle Ages. Alexander played a crucial role in this text's fantastic version of history. It was he who enclosed the unclean nations 'who ate mice and dogs and kittens and aborted fetuses' behind a pair of massive gates. The release of these nations, identified as Gog and Magog on the basis of Ezekiel 38:16, would trigger the cosmic conflict at the end times. In Pseudo-Methodios, Alexander's parents were Philip of Macedonia and the Ethiopian princess Cusheth (eponymous with Kush). The later Byzantine (i.e. Roman Christian) emperors who would face the end times and ultimately hand their kingdom over to God would also be descended from Alexander's Ethiopian mother Cusheth.[14]

There were precedents for some of this. In Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander's father is the Egyptian Nektanebo. Moreover, Josephos refers in an offhand way (while writing about later events) to the iron gates Alexander had allegedly built in the Caucasus to block off incursions by people of the north, and elsewhere he equates the biblical Gog and Magog

[10] *Parastaseis* 69; *Patria* 2.59; survey in Berger 2001; on the nature of the *Parastaseis* see Odorico 2014. Kedrenos, *Chronicle*, v. 1, 563, identifies the statue as Constantine.

[11] *AP* 16.345. For the statue collections of Constantinople see Bassett 2004.

[12] In *PG* 81, 1255–1546. For a modern commentary see Collins 1984.

[13] Alexander 1985, chapter 3.

[14] Pseudo-Methodios, *Apocalypse*; see Reinink 1992.

with people living north of the Black Sea, whom the Greeks called Scythians.[15] Yet Josephos does not correlate these two items and imbues them with no eschatological significance. Whatever its sources, the eschatological Alexander of Pseudo-Methodios, a proto-Christian king in a narrative of apocalyptic dimensions, entered the tradition as a meme of its own and was generally accepted by Byzantine readers and writers.[16] It is worth noting an interesting exception. Aspects of this story about Alexander could also be found in the Qur'an (Sura 18), which was eventually translated into Greek. One of the earliest Byzantine polemicists against Islam, Niketas of Byzantion (ninth century) drew attention to the claims in that sura about Gog and Magog and that Alexander was a monotheist in the tradition of Abraham rather than a pagan. Niketas' response was to dismiss all this as 'putrid thinking' that belonged to the realm of myth.[17]

. . . Spliced Together

Byzantine writers who wrote about Alexander chose what they wanted from among these basic building blocks and spliced them together. This process must have taken place from scratch each time, producing different and idiosyncratic combinations, as if these writers were reaching back into the original store and making individual choices each time, rather than building upon a developing Byzantine tradition about Alexander. In some cases, elements from one building block had already been separated out from their context and were circulating independently, from where they could be taken and pasted into one of the other traditions. For example, Alexander's discussions with the Gymnosophists in Plutarch, *Alexander* 64, had been excerpted and were circulating in collections of famous sayings and apophthegms, where they were picked up by the author of version λ of the *Romance* and spliced into his tale. Admittedly, Alexander's pithy encounters with the Gymnosophists were almost ready-made for the *Romance*. Many other collections of 'familiar quotations', sometimes

15 Respectively, *BJ* 7.7.4 (244–51) and *AJ* 1.6.123.

16 The Latin translation of the *Tiburtine Sibylline Oracle*, whose lost Greek original was composed at the end of the fourth century AD, contains within its eschatological revelation a reference to Alexander enclosing Gog and Magog (Sackur ed., p. 186). However, the *Oracle of Baalbek* (sixth century), the earliest Greek descendant of the original 'Tiburtine' text, does not contain this reference. It seems that the extant Latin translation was made late, under the influence of Pseudo-Methodios; see Alexander 1967, 61 n. 31; Holdenried 2016. For a survey of ancient and early medieval theories about Gog and Magog see Van Donzel and Schmidt 2009, 3–31.

17 Niketas, *Refutation of Islam* 20.1.

arranged by moral heading, circulated in Byzantium, and Alexander featured in them regularly.[18]

In this section, we consider combinations of Alexander memes that we find in the Byzantine chronicles and the later versions of the *Romance*.

As Alexander was not a Byzantine, he does not appear in historical texts that narrate contemporary history unless he is used as a comparison to praise an emperor or in an exemplum (see later in this chapter). He appears rather in chronicles that recount world history from Creation to the present. After reaching the time of Augustus, the narrative framework of these works was provided by the sequence of the Roman emperors, but before Alexander's reign they tended to rely on biblical, Greek and Roman history, in various combinations. The main emphasis in these works when it came to the fourth century BC tended to be not on Greek history (as we might expect of histories written in Greek), but on the history of the Jews under Persian rule, and so they follow the sequence of the Persian kings. This interest in the ancient Near East could override the Hellenic emphasis of the ancient sources. For example, when Photios summarised Herodotos in his *Bibliotheca* he read him essentially as a historian of the Persian empire.[19] Herodotos provided important background for the history of the Chosen People, even if he never mentions them. Alexander too regularly appears not as a disruption in the history of the Greek city-states, but in that of Achaemenid Persia. The Byzantines thus folded Alexander into Persian history in more ways than he himself could have foreseen.

Ioannes Malalas (sixth century) mixes traditions in his account of Alexander. He follows the *Romance* in presenting him as the son of Olympias and Nektanebo, and attempts to date his reign by Persian regnal years and by the Byzantine system of years since the Creation (which admitted some variation but generally placed Alexander in the 5000s since Adam). Malalas does not hide Alexander's paganism: he sacrifices a girl named Macedonia at the foundation of Alexandria, which apparently does not detract from his heroic qualities in Malalas' burlesque view of history. As we saw above, Malalas records the tradition of Alexander and the Strategion in Byzantion and his liberation of the 'Roman' East, which is followed by tales from the *Romance*, including his capture by queen Kandake.[20] There is no sign of the historical tradition behind Alexander's

[18] Jouanno 2002, 306–9.

[19] Phot., *Bibl.* cod. 60; see Kaldellis 2013, 38. For the mixture of ancient Greek and biblical history in the Byzantine chronicles, see Jeffreys 1979, 2010.

[20] Malalas, *Chronicle* 7.17–8.4. For an excellent survey of Alexander in the Byzantine chronicles see Jouanno 2001.

image here. When Malalas says that Alexander set out against Darius 'like a leopard', he is alluding to Daniel 7:6, where it presages a 'monster', though in Malalas it is apparently positive.[21] The seventh-century *Paschal Chronicle*, by contrast, does not offer a proper narrative of Alexander at all. Its main concern is to establish a general system of chronological coordination, and at this point its dating structure is provided by the Greek Olympiads and the consular years at Rome. The text merely notes that Alexander conquered Persia and Babylon, and then calculates the duration of the Persian empire. It offers a list of the twelve Alexandrias he founded and a brief note on his death. It is in a completely different part of the work, in a list of the Jewish high priests, that the chronicler mentions Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, known from Josephos.[22] In sum, the image of Alexander that appears in these two chronicles of the sixth and seventh centuries respectively could not be more different. The one in Malalas is all romance, anachronism, biblical prophesy and human sacrifice; the one in the *Paschal Chronicle* consists of dates and lists of cities, kings and Jewish priests.

A similarly wide divergence is apparent in two ninth-century chronicles, those of Georgios Synkellos and Georgios the Monk (or the Sinner), though all these authors, we must recall, were drawing on the same common store of elements. The chronicle of Synkellos was the most ambitious middle-Byzantine effort at chronological synthesis and coordination (*c.*800). When he introduces Alexander, Synkellos first highlights his visit to Jerusalem (known, ultimately, from Josephos) and then tries to fit him into the schema of Persian chronology. He then recognises that Alexander was important enough to merit an extended digression on the history of the Macedonian kings, which is (ultimately) based primarily on Diodoros. This concludes with a historical account of Alexander's career drawn explicitly from the third-century AD historian Dexippos of Athens, and leads into a history of the Hellenistic kingdoms.[23] By contrast, Georgios the Monk (*c.*875) follows a strikingly different approach. Georgios is not concerned with chronology, except in the loosest sense. His 'chronicle' is largely a series of extracts from previous, mostly Christian sources that focus on an idiosyncratic range of topics relating to the historical figures in question. His chapter on Alexander stitches together the following elements (we can even see the seams): the founding of the Strategion at Byzantion; the journey to Jerusalem, which digresses at length on the garments of the high priest and their symbolism; the Kandake episode; and the fame of

[21] Jouanno 2001, 96. [22] *Paschal Chronicle* v. 1, 321–2, 390.

[23] Georgios Synkellos, *Chronicle*, 314–18.

the journey to India, which leads into an ethnography of the Brahmans and India that goes way off course into the wonders of distant places.[24] Georgios has obviously taken his cue from Malalas but has expunged the story of human sacrifice in order to make Alexander a more plausible providential figure.[25] However, Alexander himself is sidelined by the addition of so much (recycled) Jewish and Indian ethnography.

The twelfth-century historian Ioannes Zonaras takes a different approach yet. At this point in his narrative, the main thread of his history is Jewish biblical history situated within a framework of Persian history: Alexander appears as an external force in a narrative that is otherwise about Darius. But, Zonaras states, 'now that the story has mentioned Alexander, it would be good to recount his deeds'. What follows is a fairly long and detailed summary of his career taken almost entirely from Plutarch, with an emphasis on anecdotes revealing his character and pithy sayings. When that ends, Zonaras tells the story of the visit to Jerusalem during the siege of Tyre. He does not integrate that story into his narrative, but interestingly treats them sequentially by source, in paratactic formation.[26] The narrative then continues to the Successors, with a continued emphasis on Jewish history. To give a final example, in his verse world-history, Konstantinos Manasses (twelfth century) effectively places Alexander in the sequence of Persian kings. We go from Cyrus and Darius to Xerxes and so on, then Alexander butts in, but passes quickly before we move on to the Successors.[27]

Moving beyond chronicles, this selective splicing is exemplified by the entry on Alexander in the *Souda*, a tenth-century 'dictionary of classical studies' that was used by many Byzantine scholars. The entry is one of the longest in the book. It begins with excerpts from Arrian's *Anabasis* describing the king's many fine qualities in a way that effectively paints an encomium, paying especial attention to his restraint when it came to women. It then features excerpts from the seventh-century chronicler Ioannes of Antioch that highlight Alexander's accomplishments but also, in a more negative vein, tell how he succumbed to the temptation of Persian habits and (in a brief intrusion of Romance-material) was captured by queen Kandake.[28]

24 Georgios the Monk, *Chronicle*, v. 1, 25–39. Alexander appears again later in the work, briefly, after the sequence of the kings of Persia, v. 1, 284–5.

25 Jouanno 2001, 101.

26 Zonaras, *Chronicle* 4.8–15 (v. 1, 329–55).

27 Konstantinos Manasses, *Short Chronicle* vv. 920–35.

28 *Souda* A 1121. For the problems of reconstructing Ioannes of Antioch, see Van Nuffelen 2012.

The Byzantine variants on the Romance of Pseudo-Kallisthenes also absorbed strains from the other traditions. The later versions of this text have been discussed in detail by Jouanno. By correlating her readings with the analytical categories that I have proposed, we see how version β, produced possibly in the fifth century, Christianises Alexander by removing pagan elements and adding Christian language and biblical expressions. This whitewashing parallels the operations that the chronicler Georgios the Monk performed on the mixed material that he found in his predecessor Ioannes Malalas. Also in line with the Byzantine chronicle tradition, the redactor of version β dated Alexander's death from the Creation (5,176), by Olympiad (noting that the first Olympiad fell during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah), and the Incarnation.[29] Version λ incorporates the eschatological tale of Alexander's enclosure of Gog and Magog, taken from Pseudo-Methodios, thereby situating the hero of Pseudo-Kallisthenes within the apocalyptic mythistory of human salvation. This version, then, must date after ca. 700, possibly as early as the eighth century.[30] Finally, version ε, likely produced around the same time, features detailed scenes of Alexander presiding over the chariot races in the hippodrome at Rome, scenes which evoke a Byzantine atmosphere. By 'Rome' we are probably meant to understand Constantinople (also called New Rome). In this version, Alexander functions as a prototypical Byzantine emperor ruling over his capital and performing distinctively Byzantine attributes.[31] Therefore, the Romance tradition, no less than its chronicle counterpart, was contaminated by the other Alexander memes. Alexander could be cast as a biblical, Greek and Roman figure. But was he a model of emulation for the Byzantine emperors?

Emperors As Alexander, Alexander As Emperor

Alexander's fame as a conqueror was coveted and his achievements were emulated by many later monarchs. For the Roman emperors, however, he was by no means the single most important standard of royal charisma and legitimacy, as he was for the Hellenistic kings. He had a modest place in the repertoire of imperial exempla, as a conqueror from a different culture whose extraordinary career showed how personal greatness could alter the

[29] Recension β, 3.35; Jouanno 2002, 254 (and generally 247–303).

[30] Jouanno 2002, 305 (and generally 305–38).

[31] Jouanno 2002, 361–77 (and generally 339–440); for this and other aspects of ε see Markopoulos 2014, 573–4.

rules of history. The Roman emperors were also supposed to exhibit a similar quality of transcendence, at least in the eyes of their panegyrists. A manual for praising emperors and cities from the late third century AD (attributed to one Menandros Rhetor) cites Alexander's reign as a suitable comparison by which to highlight an emperor's virtues, and when a traveling ruler is welcomed and received by a city, the orator may invite him, as 'a new Alexander', to enter and glorify it.[32] The imperial orations of the Byzantine period indeed contain many similar references to Alexander.[33] In the later Byzantine period Alexander was second only to David in the frequency of his citation as a model for kingship.[34] But comparison sometimes entailed severe criticism. Just as in antiquity, in Byzantium Alexander was an ambivalent figure: admiration for his triumphs could be overshadowed by moral condemnation of his immoderate lust for conquest and the trail of destruction he left behind him. For example, a speech delivered in 1166 before Manuel I Komnenos attacks the ancient Hellenic error about the gods and then goes on to praise the emperor for surpassing, among others, Alexander the Great. The orator grants that Alexander was valorous and a great conqueror, but admits that he proved incapable of taming his anger and baser instincts. 'He was derided as a barbarian instead of being a true Greek.'[35]

One of the most extreme denunciations is found in the panegyrical *Life of Constantine* written by that emperor's admirer Eusebios, the bishop of Caesarea. To make sense of the oddity of the first Christian emperor, Eusebios considers a number of models, including Moses, Cyrus and Alexander. But he raises Alexander only to disparage him, calling out the shameful manner of his death in drunken orgies, his bloodthirsty career, the fact that he died childless in a foreign land – he comes close to calling it an act of Providence, which wanted to rid the world of him – and the chaotic division of his kingdom. Eusebios then proceeds to show how Constantine was in all ways superior and more virtuous.[36] To be sure, any comparison of a reigning emperor to Alexander is bound to result in a verdict of (at least) equality or in the superiority of the present ruler – 'even Alexander seems small now' – but what we find in Eusebios is an

[32] Men. Rhet., *Treatise* 2.377 (p. 93), 2.426 (p. 186).

[33] For example *Pan. Lat*. 10.10 (Maximian), 12.5 (Constantine), 2.8 (Theodosius I); Them., *Or*. 3.45d (Constantius II), 5.65.b–c (Jovian), 6.80b (Valens), 15.190d and 193b, 16.203c and 204c (Theodosius I); Prokopios of Gaza, *Panegyric for Anastasios* 10, 20, 27; Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 7.5.3, 15.7.8 (Alexios I); Theodoros Prodromos, *Oration for Isaakios Komnenos* 146–58, 194–200. See below for Julian.

[34] Angelov 2007, 85–91.

[35] Michael ho tou Anchialou, *Oration to Emperor Manuel I*, 192–5.

[36] Euseb., *Vit. Const*. 1.7.1–2.

invective. It may have been influenced by Eusebios' professed dislike of wars of ambition and the glorification of physical feats he took as the mark of ancient historiography, in contrast to the 'wars of the spirit' that for him marked the growth of Christianity, whose story he told in his *Ecclesiastical History*.[37] Even so, Eusebios exhibits the hostility with which the Conqueror could be regarded. This made references to him in an imperial context ambiguous.

In this context, we may consider Prokopios of Caesarea (the same city as that of Eusebios). Prokopios wrote a contemporary history of the wars of Justinian and used speakers to express bitter criticisms of the emperor. At one point the Goths, whose country Justinian had invaded, go before the Persian king and warn him that Justinian 'is by nature a trouble-maker, he covets things that in no way belong to him, and . . . has conceived a desire to seize the entire earth'. Prokopios then, in his own voice, makes a show of defending Justinian, his ruler: 'they were bringing as charges against Justinian the very things which would naturally be panegyrics for a worthy monarch, namely that he was exerting himself to make his realm larger and much more splendid. These accusations one might make also against Cyrus, king of the Persians, and Alexander the Macedonian'. But given that it was indeed possible to accuse Alexander of such things – and the language the Goths use alludes to ancient suspicions about the Macedonian king's mad desire to find new worlds to conquer – Prokopios' defence seems at best ambiguous, even double-edged.[38]

There is little evidence that Byzantine emperors modelled their ambitions, policies, images or reigns on Alexander. Historians used to believe that Byzantine political theory was based on 'Hellenistic' theories of kingship, but direct connections are hard to establish: the position of the emperor was primarily defined through a combination of Roman and Christian elements, and the position of Roman emperor vis-à-vis his subjects was unlike that of the king of Macedonia or of any Hellenistic kingdom.[39] It was Alexander who was adjusted by Byzantine authors to look more Roman and Christian, as we have seen, rather than the reverse. Still, a few cases of emulation of Alexander may be posited. For example, it has been proposed that Constantine the Great was imitating Alexander when he adopted the diadem, a heavenward gaze on his portraiture, and a youthful, clean-shaven look alluding to

[37] Euseb., *Hist. eccl.*, book 5, preface. For Alexander in patristic literature see Klein 1987.

[38] Prokopios, *Wars* 2.2.6–14; cf. Kaldellis 2010, 261–2.

[39] Dagron 2003; Kaldellis 2015, esp. 54–5 for the Hellenistic kingdoms.

the Sun God.[40] Some of these aspects, however, may have been taken at a remove, as they had been filtered into the imperial tradition by Augustus, who was Constantine's chief imperial model.[41] Constantine's city on the Bosporos, moreover, did not claim a strong connection to the Conqueror in its architecture or adornment. As we have seen, there was but one statue of Alexander in Constantinople, in the large collection of the hippodrome, and another Alexandrine monument said by later and unreliable sources to have been placed at the Strategion. All in all, it does not amount to much.

The one emperor who is compared in the sources to Alexander most often and who himself mentioned Alexander frequently in his own writings was Julian (361–3), Constantine's nephew, who tried to restore paganism and reverse Christianisation. He also invaded Persia with a massive army, though not with the intention of conquering it outright, and he died during the withdrawal. Still, a number of sources claim that he emulated Alexander, and some modern historians assume that he was obsessed with and fantasised over his ancient model. This tradition has recently been scrutinised by Rowland Smith, who finds its conclusions overblown.[42] Julian does mention Alexander many times in his works, but that is only to be expected because he was well educated in the classics and overly aware of historical precedents for all his thoughts and actions. Excepting the satire *Caesars*, Alexander's appearances in Julian's works conform to the fairly standardised roles he played in the rhetorical tradition, and Julian does not spare him the usual criticism of arrogance and excessive severity. It is only in his *Letter to Themistios* that Julian admits that he had once thought about emulating Alexander's courage and Marcus Aurelius' wisdom, but had abandoned that ambition in fear and trepidation (the *Letter* too subsequently criticises Alexander, again conventionally).[43] Yet two Christian historians of the fifth century formulated Julian's emulation of the ancient king in startling ways, which deserve to be quoted even if they do not reflect any truth about Julian. According to Philostorgios, when Julian set out on his Persian expedition he dreamed of becoming 'a New Alexander'; according to Sokrates, Julian imagined that he was possessed by Alexander's soul, or that he literally was Alexander in another body.[44] These claims are actually about theological critique. Both authors want to

[40] Bardill 2012, 15–20, 87. See Cameron and Hall 1999, 315 on the gold medallion struck during his *vicennalia*.

[41] Zanker 1988, 36, 50, 79, 145, 186, 222. [42] Smith 2011.

[43] Julian, *Letter to Themistios* 253a–b; see Smith 2011, 88–92.

[44] Philostorgios, *Hist. eccl.* 7.15a; Sokrates, *Hist. eccl.* 3.21.7.

present Julian as deluded, duped by the nonsense of his Neoplatonist mystic gurus who were allegedly promising the emperor some kind of spiritual identification with the Conqueror. This was all Christian polemical fiction. Not surprisingly, the idea of becoming a New Alexander did not catch on in Byzantium, unlike that of becoming a New Constantine, which was a recurring motif of imperial history.[45]

Alexander makes an interesting appearance in Julian's *Caesars*, a satirical work written in connection with the December Saturnalia, probably in late 362 at Antioch as Julian prepared for his massive and ill-fated expedition against Persia the next spring. The setting is a banquet given by Romulus for the gods and emperors, and as the latter enter one by one Silenus mocks them. At the end, Herakles intervenes and asks that Alexander be invited too, as a potentially 'better man' than the rest. There is to be a contest to decide who is the best, and the short list initially includes only military types (Caesar, Augustus, Trajan and Alexander), but Kronos asks for a philosopher, and so Marcus Aurelius is short-listed too. Dionysos asks that Constantine be included as a man who was warlike but a slave to pleasure (so we know already that it will not go well for him). Each emperor makes his case, and Alexander comes across as impetuous and unrestrained. His cross-examination by Hermes goes badly, and Marcus Aurelius wins more votes in the end, by a wide margin. Constantine especially is humiliated as a vicious man who needs Jesus' forgiveness for his many crimes. Julian does not choose Alexander as a pagan role model in opposition to the Christian rulership inaugurated by Constantine, but opts instead for Marcus Aurelius, for his philosophical modesty. It is interesting, however, that Alexander would be included in this company as a quasi-emperor even if his speech highlights his Greekness in contrast to the Roman tradition represented by all the rest. Overall, *Caesars* is a thoughtful and entertaining work.

An emperor whom we might expect to have deployed more Alexander-imagery than he did was Herakleios (610–41), who set out in the 620s on a long war to crush the expanding Persian empire, which was on the threshold of conquering the Roman east. Herakleios' chief panegyrist in the capital, Georgios of Pisidia, compared him mostly to Herakles (the similarity of their names proved irresistible).[46] Gerrit Reinink has argued, however, that the *Syriac Alexander Legend* was composed around 630 and was meant to promote Herakleios' campaigns against Persia as the fulfilment of an eschatological prophesy made by Alexander that the Romans

[45] Magdalino 1994. [46] Whitby 2002.

would one day vanquish all their foes to the ends of the earth. Alexander is thereby cast as a proto-Herakleios while the latter is portrayed as a New Alexander.[47]

The legends woven around the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, Basileios I (867–86), form a fascinating chapter in the imperial appropriation of Alexander's mystique. Basileios was an ambitious man of humble origin who rose to the top of the court hierarchy by using his physical prowess to secure patronage, trading one patron for another until he finally came to the attention of Michael III, whom he then murdered to seize the throne. His son Leon VI (886–912) and grandson Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (reigned alone 945–59), both of whom were writers and scholars, tried to ennoble the otherwise sordid tale of their ancestor's rise. This whitewashing resulted eventually in a biography, *Vita Basilii*, that marshals a range of heroic and regal tropes from a variety of ancient traditions – biblical, Persian, Greek, Roman and Armenian – to cast Basileios as a noble emperor. The text claims that Basileios 'the Macedonian' was descended from the Arsacids, Constantine the Great *and* Alexander the Great.[48] To live up to Alexander, Basileios is made to tame a wild horse belonging to the emperor, an obvious allusion to Bucephalus, and one of his early supporters is a widow in the Peloponnese who visits him in the capital later, when he is emperor: their relationship is in fact a textual conflation of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in the Bible and Alexander and queen Kandake in the *Romance*.[49] Now, the *Vita* post-dates Basileios' reign by many decades, possibly almost a century, and it certainly does not prove that he emulated Alexander in any of his policies. But it may reflect aspects of that 'Macedonian' emperor's image, some of the models that were prominent in his propaganda. The patriarch Photios, for example, was accused of concocting the fake genealogy during the emperor's reign, though the earliest version we know mentions only king Trdat of Armenia as the most important ancestor, not Alexander.[50] Still, Basileios named his sons Konstantinos, Leon, Alexandros and Stephanos (Constantine, Lion, Alexander and Crown). And the scholars who worked for Basileios' grandson Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos and produced for him many volumes of historical excerpts (the *Excerpta*) filed accounts of embassies to Alexander under the rubric of 'embassies to the Romans'.[51]

[47] Reinink 2002, 86, citing previous studies. [48] *Vita Basilii* 3; see Van Hoof 2002.

[49] *Vita Basilii* 13 (horse), 11, 74–7 (Danielis); see the analysis by Anagnostakis and Kaldellis 2014, 115–23.

[50] Niketas of Paphlagonia, *The Life of Ignatios* 89. [51] Németh 2018, 170.

In sum, Alexander did not exert sufficient gravitational pull to bend the Byzantine imperial tradition in his direction; he merely shaped some of its occasional imagery. But the reverse did happen: Alexander was increasingly imagined as a proto-Byzantine emperor. We have seen instances of this in narrative literature, and it is also apparent in his representations in late Roman and Byzantine art. A matching pair of round textile patches (*segmenta*) divided between the Textile Museum in Washington and the Cleveland Museum of Art and dating likely from the seventh century, depict a traditional scene of the mounted victorious emperor, except the (Coptic) inscription identifies the main figure as 'Alexander the Macedonian'.[52] Was Egyptian interest in Alexander sparked by the Egyptian parentage he is given in the *Romance*? By far the most popular motif of Alexander-related art, starting in the tenth century, depicted his ascent into the sky as recounted in the β version of the *Romance*: Alexander yoked two birds (or griffins) to a basket into which he climbed and, by dangling livers before them as bait, he induced them to fly up into the heavens from where he could see the shape of the earth and sea. This image, more or less stylised, was depicted in stone sculptures, seal rings, enamel roundels, ivory caskets and bowls, albeit not in extant manuscript illuminations. His crown and, in the images where they can be discerned, his garments too are those of a Byzantine emperor.[53]

Other Appearances in Literature and Art

We begin with the propaedeutic genres. The *progymnasmata* were model exercises used in Byzantine rhetorical education to train students in the building blocks of proper composition, such as brief narration, anecdote, vivid description, speech in character, and comparison. As a topic for such templates, Alexander fell just within the range of suitable canonical material; in fact, he defined its outer temporal limits before the onset of the unloved Hellenistic period. The progymnastic imagination focussed largely on Homer (and mythology in general) but also featured some of the historical highlights from the classical period, such as the events in Herodotos, Thucydides

[52] Shepherd 1971.

[53] Walker 2012, 94–5, 111, 123–7 (see 210 n. 78–80 for extensive bibliography, along with Jouanno 2002, 303 n. 279); Kalavrezou 2014. See also the specimens from Chalkis (sculpture) and Thessalonike (gold ring) in Drandaki, Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Tourta 2013, 199, 274–5.

and Demosthenes.[54] Hence in some collections Alexander's father Philip appears more frequently because of his prominence in Demosthenes. But Alexander too makes occasional appearances. In the sample *progymnasmata* he issued to advertise his school, Libanios of Antioch (fourth century) included a long treatment of the king's famous saying that his friends were his true treasure and also a detailed *ekphrasis* of his statue as the founder of Alexandria.[55] Among the maxims listed in the progymnastic handbook of Aphthonios (fourth century) was the Homeric verse: 'a wise counselor should not sleep all night' (*Il.* 2.24). In the middle Byzantine period, Ioannes of Sardeis wrote a commentary on Aphthonios elaborating this maxim under the rubric of 'an anecdote that involves a saying', where the line is quoted by Alexander to Diogenes; he also treated it as 'a double anecdote involving a saying', where Diogenes responds with the next verse (*Il.* 2.25): 'if he is man to whom many cares have been entrusted',[56] that is not himself.

Longer exercises took the form of speeches. We have two speeches by Sopatros (fourth century), one on the topic '*Demosthenes is sent to crown Alexander; finding Thebes razed to the ground, he does not give him the crown; upon his return he is put on trial*', and another on the topic '*With Alexander on the way, the Thebans send for help to the Messenians, seeking an alliance, but the latter refuse, so Thebes is razed to the ground. The Messenians are now tried for ingratitude after Thebes is rebuilt.*' It includes the Messenians' response ('ingratitude' because Thebes had liberated Messene from Sparta earlier in the century).[57] The twelfth-century rhetor Nikephoros Basilakes also has an *ethopoieia* (a study in character, or what would so-and-so say) on '*What Ismenias the flute-player would say if he were forced by Alexander to sing about the destruction of Thebes*'.[58] It is the brutal and barbarous Alexander that informs this exercise (Ismenias was a Theban).

What is interesting about Basilakes' topic is that the story of Alexander and Ismenias was known almost certainly from the *Romance*, and not the biographical-historical tradition. This is a case where more popular and lowbrow material about Alexander infiltrated the world of high-register

[54] I thank Scott Kennedy for his help in sorting through this material. For Alexander in ancient declamation see Kohl 1915, 83–7.

[55] Libanios, *Progymnasmata: The Exercise in Anecdote* 1; *Description* 27.

[56] Aphth., *Prog.* 7; Ioannes of Sardeis, *Commentary on Aphthonios* 3 (pp. 39–41). Many other rhetors treated this theme, sometimes mentioning Alexander.

[57] Sopatros, *Classification of Topics*, 205–20 and 239–44.

[58] Basilakes, *Progymnasma* 53 (= *Ethopoieia* 24, pp. 217–21).

Attic composition. Proper rhetorical training, after all, aimed to recreate the style and ambiance of pure classical prose and did not frequently admit source material such as the *Romance* (the Bible was another exception). It is entirely possible that Byzantine scholars did not always discriminate in their choice of source when it came to Alexander, or did not rigorously keep the two traditions separate. Consider the case of Byzantine military manuals. Given that late Roman and Byzantine warfare was entirely different from that of the Macedonians, it is not surprising that Alexander would not figure much in these works. In fact, one manual, attributed to the warrior-emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9), even says that the formation of the ancient Macedonian phalanx was not practical or relevant for Byzantine armies. The only specific battle it mentions is one between Alexander and the Ethiopians, who were conveyed on elephants and had set other wild beasts loose between their ranks. This too almost certainly comes from a version of the *Romance*, which is here treated as a factual account of military history.[59]

Alexander also makes appearances in Byzantine hagiography, which likewise drew on both the *Romance* and the 'high-style' rhetorical tradition. I will mention two creative examples from opposite ends of the spectrum (if we can imagine the field of references to Alexander in that way). The *Life of St Makarios of Rome* (possibly eighth century, but impossible to date precisely) recounts the journey of three monks who travel east in search of the hermit Makarios through lands that become increasingly exotic. After encountering the Dog-Headed People (*Kynokephaloi*), they find the arch that, according to the *Romance*, Alexander set up during his pursuit of Darius, and they read the inscription upon it. In fact, the frame-narrative of the *Life* (a search for Makarios) may have been inspired by Alexander's quest for the Islands of the Blessed (*Makarioi*) in the *Romance*.[60] By contrast, the fourteenth-century philosopher and historian Nikephoros Gregoras had his eye on the historical Alexander when he wrote various works on saints. In an oration in honour of St Demetrios, the patron saint of Thessalonike, Gregoras compares Thessalonike and Alexandria – to the advantage of the former, of course. This elicits from him a presentation of Alexander's family tree, as both cities were founded in close chronological proximity by members of the same royal family. Later in the work he formally compares the impact the deaths of St Demetrios and Alexander had on the world. In the oration in honour of Constantine, who was regarded as a saint in the Orthodox tradition, Gregoras again compares

[59] *Praecepta Militaria* 1.7, on which see McGeer 1995, 182.

[60] Gero 1992; Roilos 2014, 19–23.

the foundation of Constantinople to that of Alexandria and the death of Constantine to that of Alexander. To write these formal comparisons, Gregoras drew exclusively upon the historical-biographical tradition.[61]

One more formal comparison between an emperor and Alexander deserves mention here because it involved works of art, neither of which survive. In 1152 the anonymous poet known conventionally as Manganeios Prodromos compared a portrait of the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) and his German wife Bertha to a painting by Aetion of Alexander and Roxane. The Byzantine portrait must have been similar to many of its kind that survive in manuscript illuminations, ivories and mosaics, in which the imperial family are dressed in full regalia and stand hieratically against a bright background. The Aetion painting compared to it seems to be the one Lucian describes in his work *Herodotos or Aetion*, though our poet has taken some liberties with its description. Thus, both paintings are textually mediated for us – this is 'art in text' – whereas only one was for the poet and his imperial audience. In sum, the poet finds the Byzantine couple far more dignified and cosmically framed than the ancient one, which featured Alexander lounging in bed while cupids brought Roxane to him for conjugal mating.[62] The choice of materials to compare had predetermined who would win.

Later Byzantium

The later Byzantine period witnessed dramatic changes in the empire's place in the world. Most importantly, Constantinople was conquered by the army of the Fourth Crusade and occupied for fifty-seven years. The empire's territories were carved up among the conquerors, who insisted on calling the Byzantines 'Greeks' rather than 'Romans', while Asia Minor was gradually lost to Muslim settlers as the Seljuk and then the Ottoman Turks established their emirates. The Byzantines responded to all this by partly reinventing themselves in relation to their cultural patrimony and their new neighbours. Among their adaptations was a greater acceptance of their Hellenic ethnic background, to which they had previously been indifferent or even hostile. But in order to postulate ethnic connections across such time spans, the Byzantines relied on the geographical identifications enabled by the classical rhetorical tradition. A bishop in late Byzantine

[61] Paraskevopoulou 2013, 69–72, 118–19, 124.

[62] The poem is in Miller 1881, 744–5; discussion by Maguire and Maguire 2007, 144–5.

Athens, for example, might speak to his congregation as the descendants of the ancient Athenians, in part because rhetorical manuals had trained him to praise a locale by highlighting the glories of its most famous ancient residents. Thus, when Manuel II Palaiologos addressed the people of Thessalonike in 1383, while the city was facing a Turkish attack, he reminded them that they were Romans but that their fatherland was that of Philip and Alexander, and therefore they drew qualities from both peoples.[63] Likewise, the intellectual Demetrios Kydones had exhorted the emperor Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos in 1345 to fight, 'for the very name of Macedonia by itself inspires terror in the barbarians, as they remember Alexander and how the few Macedonians with him conquered Asia. Show them, O emperor, that you too are Macedonians, and that you differ from Alexander only in your age'.[64]

A Hellenic-Macedonian identity was useful not only in dealing with the Latins (who disparaged the Byzantines as faithless and effeminate *Graeci*), but also in dealing with Muslims. In the long history he wrote of his own times, the retired emperor Kantakouzenos revealed that the Ilkhanid and Mamluk rulers regarded the Byzantines as Macedonians, even as the heirs of Alexander. It was probably notions such as these, circulating in the context of international diplomacy, that resulted in the doctrine that is expressed in a Byzantine treatise on court protocols that was in some way linked to Kantakouzenos himself: the Eastern nations, it claims, honour the emperor as the heir of Alexander, whereas the Western ones honour him as the heir of Constantine the Great.[65] And it was not only the emperors in Constantinople who were dusting off Alexander as a newly relevant model for this more complex world. Another Byzantine state that emerged from the wreckage of the Fourth Crusade was the empire of Trebizond, whose rulers, the Grand Komnenoi, sometimes styled themselves as Lords of the East. It was likely one of them, Alexios III Komnenos (1349–90), who commissioned the lavishly illustrated manuscript of the *Romance* currently in the Venice Hellenic Institute (gr. 5). Alexios III, whose empire was surrounded by Muslims whom the Byzantines, with justice, called 'Persians', is called an 'imitator of Alexander' in extant panegyrics. The colourful Alexander who marches, fights and holds court on folio after folio of this manuscript accordingly appears as a Byzantine Trapezountine ruler.[66]

63 Manuel II Palaiologos, *Speech of Advice to the Thessalonians*, 297.
64 Demetrios Kydones, *Letter* 8 (v. 1, 35).
65 Text, translation and commentary on pseudo-Kodinos in Macrides, Munitiz and Angelov 2013, 150–1, 356–7.
66 Trahoulias 2010, citing previous discussions.

A famously Protean figure, Alexander managed to adapt to the Byzantines' Roman, biblical and Greek cultural synthesis and to change his role depending on the circumstances that this ancient empire faced in a rapidly changing world. We should not, however, remain blind to the limitations of what he had to offer. He stood for an ideal of conquest, domination and diplomacy from a position of strength, and even for a spirit of adventure and romantic exploration, but he had very little to say about how a king should behave towards his subjects: he was not a model of rule as such. Also, his versatility and international appeal meant that foreign powers could claim him too, and this is exactly what happened at the end of Byzantium. When Mehmet II Fatih took the city in 1453, his new Greek subjects acclaimed him as a New Alexander.

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Abbreviations

BNJ = *Brill's New Jacoby*, ed. I. Worthingon. Online publication. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby-2
FGrH = *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby. Leiden.
PG = *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris.

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11 | The Spanish Alexander

A Figure of Praise and Blame

RICHARD RABONE

The *Libro de Alexandre* is one of the masterpieces of medieval Spanish letters. It is a monumental work spanning some 2,675 four-line stanzas, and presents a complete account of Alexander's life from cradle to grave, detailing his historical conquests but also including material drawn from legend, as well as certain digressions from that theme introduced by the Spanish poet, the most substantial of which has Alexander recount the history of the Trojan War in more than 400 stanzas. However, the poem's view of its hero is complex, marked by several significant ambivalences. It presents a classical warrior who fights as a medieval knight, a paragon who fuses the twin heroic ideals of *sapientia* and *fortitudo*, and a pagan who prays to the Christian God, apparently conquering the world in God's name; all these are features of a glorious ruler whose deeds will be deservedly remembered long after his passing. Yet the poem also contains substantial and strongly worded criticism of the Macedonian leader, especially on moral grounds, and the question of Alexander's possible damnation looms large in critical discussion of his death. As Marina Brownlee has observed, the *Alexandre* is thus remarkable for avoiding straightforward advocacy of either of the two presentations of Alexander long identified as typical of the Middle Ages: the 'triumphant pagan' or the 'failed Christian'.[1] The present chapter offers an account of the internal dynamics of the Spanish poem to show how these conflicting perspectives are made to coexist within it, focusing especially on the moral dangers of which Alexander's conduct may stand as a warning.[2]

I begin with a brief introduction to the poem itself. The text of the *Alexandre* survives in two manuscript versions which are more or less complete (commonly designated *O* and *P*), along with a small number of

[1] Brownlee 1983, 263.

[2] The *Alexandre* does not represent Alexander's only incursion into medieval Iberia, though it is his most significant. For an introduction to his appearances in historical writing and wisdom literature, as well as in the *Alexandre* itself, see Zuwiyya 2011; for a study of his treatment in the *General Estoria* of Alfonso X, where he is given sustained attention in an account based on the *Historia de proeliis* (I^2), see Jonxis-Henkemans 1978.

fragments, but the circumstances of its production remain a matter for speculation. Internal evidence of the author's identity is scarce, but much has been made of a brief apostrophe in line 1548d, while each manuscript also contains an *explicit* in its final stanza (2675), attributing the text to either Gonzalo de Berceo (MS *P*) or Juan Lorenzo (MS *O*). However, these references are not easily reconciled with 1548d, where 'Gonçalo' this time appears in MS *O*, while MS *P* instead names a mysterious 'Lorente', though it is not impossible that this is a corrupted version of 'Lorenço'.[3] Lorenzo is generally accepted to be a copyist, leaving Berceo as the primary candidate for authorship of the poem, yet this view has found only limited support, as the *Alexandre*'s ostentatious erudition, its pagan theme, and its complex interweaving of material from a variety of sources all mark it as something quite distinct from Berceo's other work.[4] The most convincing explanation of this textual evidence is offered by Ian Michael, who takes 1548d as a jocular reference to the poet's primary model, Gautier de Châtillon; a copyist failing to grasp the nature of that reference may then have introduced confusion by erroneously replacing Gautier's name with another.[5] The *explicit* would then be explained as a straightforward reference to a scribe (in MS *O*), or, in the case of MS *P*'s mention of Berceo, a later attribution added in error, or even perhaps an attempt by a member of the community at Berceo's monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla to claim the poem as his 'for the greater glory of that house'.[6] In any case, on this reading the text thus offers no trustworthy indication of the identity of the *Alexandre*'s author. Alternatively, Isabel Uría Maqua has suggested that these mismatched references are evidence of a collaborative process of authorship, with the two manuscripts representing different redactions of the poem, in which 1548d again represents a scholarly joke, but one which the different redactions direct against different members of the group of writers who together composed the poem; Berceo and Lorenzo would thus be seen as two members of that authorial team, who contributed at least to the final stage of the work's composition, in which the material was put into verse.[7] Nonetheless, the balance of critical opinion remains with the single, anonymous author, a situation which is not unusual in texts of the period.

[3] Line 1548d reads: '¡Lorente [or: Gonçalo], ve dormir, ca assaz has velado!' ('Lorente [or: Gonzalo], go and sleep, you have stayed up long enough!'). Quotations from the Spanish text are taken from Casas Rigall 2007; translations are reproduced from Such and Rabone 2009, with occasional adaptations. References are to stanza number; letters a–d indicate lines within a given stanza.

[4] See Casas Rigall 2007, 23–4, and the references cited there.

[5] See Michael 1986.

[6] Michael 1986, 121.

[7] See Uría Maqua 2000, 193–5.

The poem's dating is similarly unclear. Its declared reliance on Gautier de Châtillon's *Alexandreis* allows the completion of that poem during the 1180s to serve as a *terminus post quem*, but various possible dates of composition have been defended from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Uría Maqua's theory of collaborative composition leads her to advocate the period 1217–27, to coincide with the flourishing of the *studium generale* in Palencia, the seat of learning where that authorial team would have been based.[8] A similar date might find a different kind of support in the parallels between certain features of the poem and the conclusions of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), although there is no reason to assume that such issues were not already topical before the Council passed its conclusions.[9] A second prominent school of thought dates the poem to the first decade of the thirteenth century, principally on the basis of a reference in stanza 1778 to the date of Darius' funeral and the amount of time that has since elapsed; once again, however, the two manuscripts differ in the numbers they record here, and calculations based on them cannot therefore be regarded as certain. As things stand, it is safest to date the poem to the first third of the thirteenth century, which has still proved sufficiently precise for the poem to be commonly regarded as the first of its kind: the origin of the vernacular poems grouped under the label of *mester de clerecía*.

The term *mester de clerecía* refers to a corpus of lengthy vernacular poems written in *cuaderna vía*, a rhyming, four-line stanzaic form where each line is divided into two heptasyllabic hemistichs.[10] Both terms occur in the *Alexandre*'s programmatic second stanza where the poet describes his craft, and both may be taken to reinforce the poem's emphasis on its own erudition, the first by reference to the scholarship of the clergy, the second via a possible etymological hint of the *quadrivium*, a different kind of 'fourfold path' denoting subjects taught in the schools.[11] Nonetheless, this learning which the *Alexandre* is so keen to flaunt remains only part of the picture, as these works are often seen to have a fundamentally didactic intention, a commitment to sharing the edifying wisdom which is the fruit of the cleric's study. However, as Julian Weiss has recently argued, this didacticism does not imply the simple peddling of a party line; instead, these poems may include alternative perspectives on their theme, different and potentially conflicting voices which are worked

[8] See Uría Maqua 2000, 198–9. [9] See Franchini 1997; Such and Rabone 2009, 18–20.

[10] For substantial studies dedicated to this poetic corpus see Uría Maqua 2000; Weiss 2006; Curtis 2014.

[11] See Willis 1956–7, 214–17.

through in the text.[12] This is the background against which the *Libro de Alexandre* should be read, with its competing presentations of its central figure.

Indeed, moral didaxis has long been seen as fundamental to the *Alexandre*'s purpose, as the poem includes unambiguous criticism of Alexander for his greed and pride. This criticism stands in tension with the poem's obvious admiration of Alexander's qualities and his feats of conquest, as well as with his repeated aspiration that his deeds should win him undying fame, in which it is made clear that he succeeds.[13] This admiration and affection for Alexander, which endures right to the poem's end, clearly has potential consequences for how strongly the moral criticism of the hero is felt, and the relationship between these two voices of praise and blame is fundamental for the interpretation of the work.[14] Yet we should also remember that these moral criticisms are absolutely standard ones, and would resonate in the Christian context in which the poem was written: it is little surprise to see Alexander rebuked for his pride, both because of his association with that vice elsewhere, and because of its prominence in Christian moral discourse. The poem's moralising thus forms one of the essential ways in which its content is adapted to suit a contemporary audience, alongside the 'medievalisation' and 'Christianisation' of many of the details of the tale.[15] This is the process by which many of the ambivalences noted at the outset of this chapter are created, as pagan and Christian details come to overlap, and the classical warrior is figured as a medieval knight. I turn now to an account of some of these prominent ambivalences, and the light they may throw on the poem's central question: the relationship between celebration and censure of its hero.

The first of the dualities which Alexander embodies is his fusion of wisdom and valour. This, of course, has been the fundamental core of heroic identity since Homer, as the *Alexandre* poet would have known at least via the testimony of Isidore of Seville, whose definition of heroic verse

12 See Weiss 2006, 4–11.

13 See stanza 2668: 'Si murieron las carnes, que lo han por natura, | non murió el buen preçio: öy encara dura. | ¡Qui muere en buen preçio es de buenaventura, | ca lo meten los sabios luego en escriptura!' ('Although his flesh perished, as it must do by nature, | his honour did not die, for it still endures today; | a man who dies with honour enjoys good fortune, | for at once wise men set his deeds down in writing.') An influential reading of the poem which focuses on its treatment of fame is provided by Lida de Malkiel 1952, 167–97.

14 See for example Bly and Deyermond 1972, 179, who suggest that the ambiguity of the ending, where both these voices are in play, mitigates against a simple moralising purpose, and might rather be due to a desire to depict 'the tragedy of Alexander's overthrow'.

15 The fundamental study of this process remains Michael 1970.

records that 'celestial men, as it were, worthy of the skies because of their wisdom and strength, are called heroes'.[16] Precious few heroes, however, really achieved that fusion, with excellence in a single facet being more common. The Spanish poet is clear too that both qualities are required, warning openly against the dangers of thoughtless valour at 2012–13. Alexander's pre-eminence in both these fields thus affords a significant opportunity for praise, and the poem's repeated presentation of his reputation in these terms is an essential pillar of the case for a positive Alexander. Both facets are clearly highlighted from the poem's opening, as line 6b labels him 'franc'e ardit e de grant sabïençia' ('generous, courageous and a man of great wisdom'), while the general flattering tone of such references may be illustrated by Cleades' address to Alexander at Thebes, where the flattery is designed to win his favour and persuade him to spare the city:

> En ti son ajuntados seso e clerezía
> esfuerço e franqueza e grant palaçianía.
> Semeja la tu lengua la de Filosofía.
> ¡Pareçe en tus mañas qu'el Crïador te guía! (235)
>
> (In you there are united intelligence and learning,
> and with them valour, liberality and great courtesy.
> You seem to speak with the tongue of Philosophy,
> and it seems that in your actions the Creator is your guide.)

Not every such reference implies such a harmonious balance, of course: in describing what he has learnt to his master, Aristotle, Alexander's enthusiasm for his studies is repeatedly dimmed by his fervent desire to leave at once for war (38–47), while his famous solution to the problem of the Gordian knot – though presented as an example of his resourcefulness (831–8) – may be read on one level as a challenge to the intelligence which is answered instead by brute force.[17] Moreover, while these are clearly positive qualities and indispensable for a hero, the potential remains for both mental and physical excellence to be inappropriately applied, as we will see. In the main, however, this marriage of strength and sagacity is one of the essential vehicles for the poet's admiration, as a rare fusion of these qualities is presented as a cornerstone of Alexander's success.

[16] 'Heroes appellantur viri quasi aerii et caelo digni propter sapientiam et fortitudinem' (*Etymologiae* 1.39.9; translation reproduced from Barney, Lewis, Beach and Berghof 2006). The Spanish poet acknowledges Isidore's place among his sources at 1476d.

[17] On the episode of the Gordian knot see Weiss 2006, 130–1.

Importantly, this is also an area in which classical and medieval value systems coincide, since the combination of *sapientia* and *fortitudo* was also to find a place in the medieval ideal of kingship.[18] The focus on these two qualities is thus also part of the poet's strategy of presenting Alexander in terms which will resonate with a medieval audience. It is no coincidence that other virtues pertaining to the medieval conception of an ideal ruler are prominently displayed by Alexander, including liberality and magnanimity, the former visible for example in his equitable distribution of the booty from Gaugamela, in which he took no share himself (1455); the latter may be seen in his pity for the mutilated Greek captives at Persepolis (1608–9), his grief at Darius' death (see especially 1772–7), or his treatment of the vanquished Porus (2208).[19] These episodes are familiar from the sources, but their preservation in the Spanish poem helps to reinforce the picture of a virtuous ruler whose qualities play well in a medieval context. Moreover, if the focus on Alexander's cleverness is itself traditional, the poem's account of his education has Aristotle delivering a distinctively medieval syllabus based on the *trivium* and *quadrivium* (38–47), and that is original with the Spanish poet. These features of the work are thus not simply part of a general encomium of Alexander; they are specifically designed to ennoble him in terms which have contemporary resonance.

However, this strategy cannot be restricted to Alexander himself, but is part of a wider technique of viewing Alexander's world though a medieval lens. Aristotle's role as tutor thus brings him the medieval designation 'Maestre Aristóteles' (32a), and a similar process of updating is at work in referring to high-born men on all sides using terms derived from the Spanish nobility, as 'ricos omnes' (1034a) or 'fijos d'algo' (206b), for example. The same logic is often visible in battle descriptions, and battlefield prowess is commonly figured as excellence in the medieval virtue of chivalry; indeed, this applies not only to Alexander and his foes, but also to their own illustrious antecedents in the Trojan War, whose excellence Alexander is determined to emulate:

> ¡Non conto yo mi vida   por años nin por días,
> mas por buenas faziendas   e por cavallerías!:
> ¡non escrivió Omero   en sus alegorías
> los meses de Aquiles,   mas las barraganías! (2288)

[18] See Michael 1970, 31–2, 41–50. On this and other features of the afterlife of this topos see Curtius 1953, 170–80.

[19] See further Michael 1970, 60–3, 66–9. On the breadth of the medieval understanding of *magnanimitas* and its application to Alexander in other texts see also Cary 1956, 197–200.

(I do not count my life in years or in days
but by great deeds and acts of chivalry.
Homer did not set down in his allegories
the months Achilles lived, but his acts of valour.)

Alexander thus openly sets himself alongside Achilles, but the feats of martial valour on which the comparison rests are designated 'caballerías', a term borrowed from the world of medieval Spain. Moreover, this is no idle comparison, but recalls for the reader a long digression at 334–771, where Alexander tells the story of the Trojan War to his men. That embellishment is of course partly a means for the Spanish poet to parade his learning, but Alexander's own purpose within the poem was to provide his men with an example of the fame that great deeds can win, and to encourage them to measure themselves against the warriors who fought at Troy (769–71); in recalling this Trojan material in the aftermath of his own victories over Darius and Porus, Alexander's implication is that this challenge has been met, and his men now deserve to match their forebears in renown. What matters here, however, is that the story is again viewed though medieval eyes, as warriors including Hector, Diomedes and Achilles are praised for their 'chivalry' (see for example 70a; 614d), the pagan goddesses who quarrel over Paris' golden apple become medieval 'dueñas' ('ladies'), and the episode of Achilles hiding out at Lycomachus' court is transposed – with delicious incongruity – to a convent (412–16). This principle of medievalisation thus emerges as an essential feature of the poem, as Alexander's straddling of the classical and medieval worlds is not only a symptom of his own ambivalent presentation, but also part of a wider authorial strategy to integrate the story into a medieval context.

That final example of Achilles' tarrying also serves to introduce a further aspect of this strategy, since his new convent surroundings are specifically Christian ones. This process of 'Christianisation' follows similar logic to medievalisation, and as Achilles shows, it is a principle which again extends beyond the presentation of Alexander himself; indeed, the poem is replete with brief invocations of the Christian God or the Devil, and an array of incidental details are presented using an anachronistically Christian frame of reference, including simple references to time of day, which are indicated using the canonical hours of prayer by alluding to 'None', 'Terce' and the like. However, these Christian accretions do not imply that the story's pagan heritage is somehow expunged. Instead, pagan and Christian elements coexist and are brought into alignment, as may be seen in the following assessment of Darius' defeat at Issus:

Assaz dixiera Dario consejo aguisado,
mas era otra guisa de los dios ordenado:
¡por su ventura dura non li fue otorgado,
ca el ex' de le rueda yazié trastornado!

El cuedar de los omnes todo es vanidat:
los pensamientos nuestros non han establidat,
ca non es nuestro seso sinon fragilidat,
fuera que nos contién' Dios por su pïedat. (986–7)

(The plan that Darius had set out was wise
but events were not thus ordained by the gods;
to his cruel misfortune this was not granted him,
for Fortune's wheel had spun on its axis.

Man's intentions are naught but vanity;
our thoughts have no stability to them,
for our plans have nothing if not fragility,
unless God sustains us through His mercy.)

Darius is thus not presented as particularly culpable for his defeat, which the poet does not here attribute to any error on his part, or indeed to brilliance on Alexander's. Instead, the outcome is presented as a matter of providence: Darius could not win this battle simply because God's will was otherwise. Stanza 987 presents this view in straightforwardly Christian terms, with its reference to a singular God, the need to rely on his mercy and the transitory vanity that defines human endeavour. Yet the preceding stanza referred instead to plural gods overseeing affairs, and to the famous wheel of the pagan goddess Fortuna, the classical archetype of worldly vanity. However, no tension is felt between these two depictions, as the classical formulation may be unproblematically grafted onto the Christian truth at hand: it is a recognisable pagan proxy for the Christian truth of providence, and its employment in a Christian context could count on the authority of Boethius.[20] The *Alexandre*'s process of 'Christianisation' does not therefore obscure the pagan origins of the tale, but it does imply that Alexander's story and the meaning it exemplifies are approached from a Christian perspective, with which the details of the poem are often, as here, made to accord.

Moreover, this particular image is central to the interpretation of the poem, as references to Fortune, Fate(s) and the influence of plural gods are frequent, with or without their Christian counterparts of *vanitas* and providence. More common still are the poem's various allusions to the

[20] See *Philosophiae consolatio* 2.1–2.

will of God, or to God and the Devil involving themselves in man's affairs. These comments are often very brief, as we saw with Cleades' suggestion at 236d that God was guiding Alexander's actions, but when taken together, and alongside the pagan references to fate, they do more than simply contribute to a broadly Christianised frame of reference. Instead, their combined weight gives the inescapable sense that a divine hand is guiding events, and that man's achievements are not simply his own, but are bestowed by celestial favour, as the logic of the poet's assessment of Issus implied. Of course, this line of thought should not be taken so far as to discount human agency entirely, as the sense of an overarching divine mandate may be seen to coexist with human expertise or other, more earthly lines of causation; thus, the Greek deception of the wooden horse remains Odysseus' own, but it is ratified as a good idea by being considered inspired by God (736, 744), while Philip's decision to meet Pausanias in combat is attributed both to an immediate psychological cause and to the machinations of the Devil:

> Volvïó con él guerra por non seer reptado;
> andava por el regno a todo su mal grado;
> tovos'el rey Felipo d'esso por deshonrado;
> fue a lidiar con él: ¡levolo ý el pecado! (172)
>
> (Lest he be challenged, he waged war against Philip
> and moved around the kingdom doing harm at will.
> King Philip considered himself dishonoured by this
> and went against him in combat; the Devil led him into error.)

However, this overriding sense that events unfold according to providential design raises the question of Alexander's own relationship with God, since the Macedonian king is granted unprecedented worldly success. As we expect, the impression repeatedly given in the poem is that Alexander's conquests are indeed authorised and aided by God, as the poet makes clear, for example, in the course of his campaign against Porus:

> Tan bien sopo el rëy la cosa aguisar,
> con Dïos, que'l querié valer e ayudar:
> de la su mano ovo don Yulcos a finar;
> en compaña de Poro non remaneçió par. (2051)
>
> (The King knew so well how to deal with the matter,
> with the aid of God, who wished to help and support him,
> that Yulcon was to die at Alexander's hand;
> in Porus' army there remained no man to match him.)

Furthermore, in addition to this kind of explicit aside, the poet presents Alexander's worldly sovereignty as the fulfilment of certain prophecies, cementing the impression that his power is divinely ordained. Alexander is thus presented as the fulfilment of the biblical prophecy found in Daniel 8, where a two-horned ram is felled by a goat, the ram's horns being taken to refer to the kings of Media and Persia, while the goat is interpreted as the king of Greece:

> Danïel el propheta,   niño de Dios amado,
> dentro en Babiloña   lo ovo profetizado:
> que vernié en la sierra   un cabrón mal domado;
> ¡quebrantarié los cuernos   al carnero doblado!
>
> Ésti fue Alexandre,   de los fechos granados;
> Dario fue el carnero   de los regnos doblados,
> que Persïa e Media,   tan buenos dos regnados,
> ambos él los mandava,   mas fueron quebrantados. (1339–40)
>
> (Daniel the prophet, the beloved child of God,
> had made the prophecy in the land of Babylonia,
> that an untamed goat would come to the mountains
> which would shatter the twin horns of the ram.
>
> This was Alexander, the man of great deeds;
> Darius was the ram, with his twin kingdoms,
> for Persia and Media, two very fine dominions,
> were both beneath his rule – but they were shattered.)

Indeed, this interpretation of the prophecy in Daniel is not uncommon: it finds authoritative support in St Jerome, and the resulting view that Alexander's successes were in line with the will of God became widespread in the Middle Ages.[21] Within the poem too this serves to reinforce an earlier reference to that prophecy in stanza 1145, where it immediately preceded Alexander's account of a vision which came to him in a dream, in which an angelic figure he now recognises as Jadus, Jerusalem's high priest, gives the Macedonian further evidence of God's support for his campaigns. This dream-prophecy also serves to extend Alexander's remit, as his dominion is foretold to encompass not only Persia and Media, but the entire known world:

[21] See Curtis 2014, 20; cf. Cary 1956, 120–1.

Entiende, Alexandre, qué te quiero fablar:
salte de Ëuropa, passa a ultramar.
¡Avrás todos los regnos del mundo a ganar!;
¡nunca fallarás omne que't pueda contrastar! (1157)

(Understand, Alexander, what I wish to tell you:
take your leave of Europe and go beyond the seas;
you will come to conquer all the kingdoms of the world;
you will never find a man who can stand against you.)

In his interpretation of this dream, Alexander is clear that his vision is a message from the Christian God (1161–2), as these various references to providence and prophecy repeatedly indicate that from the poem's perspective, Alexander's worldly success is divinely sanctioned. Yet it is not quite true to say that Alexander therefore becomes a fully Christian hero, as is clear from the account of his role in the enclosure of the 'Unclean Nations':

Quando ovo el rëy la oraçión complida,
maguer era pagano, fuele de Dios oída:
¡moviéronse las peñas, cadauna de su partida!;
¡soldáronse en medio, fue presa la sallida!

[. . .]

Quando Dios tanto fizo por un omne pagano,
tanto o más farié por un fïel cristiano.
Por nós non lo perdamos; d'esto só yo çertano:
¡qui en Dios ave dubda torpe es e villano! (2114, 2116)

(When the King had brought his prayer to its end,
although he was a pagan it was heard by God;
each one of the rocks moved inwards from its side
and they were sealed in the middle, the exit closed.

Since God did all of this for a man who was pagan,
for a faithful Christian, He would do as much or more;
we must not lose Him – of this I am certain:
the man who doubts God is foolish and base.)

These lines thus offer a neat summary of Alexander's position. He is clearly seen to be acting with God's support, and that support is also behind his earthly hegemony, as we have seen. His pagan origins, however, are not elided, as the Spanish poet's Christian interpretation of this classical figure keeps something from each tradition, as was the case in a different context

with the parallel of fortune and providence. The important process of Christianisation does not therefore imply that Alexander is rewritten as a fully Christian figure, despite making these prayers to God; he remains a pagan warrior, but with a providential role.

By legitimising Alexander's conquests within a Christian framework, the poem's account of providence thus plays an important role in the positive presentation of Alexander, along with the emphasis on traits of his that were valued in medieval rulers, his marriage of *sapientia* and *fortitudo*, and omnipresent laudatory epithets which refer to him as 'the good King' or as a man much favoured by fortune. Along similar lines, Charles Fraker has suggested that many of the *Alexandre* poet's additions to what he finds in Gautier, from the prodigies at Alexander's birth to his qualities of body and mind, are designed specifically to buttress this praise using topoi familiar from handbooks of rhetoric, as the poem was intended as 'a vast epideictic oration, a long formal speech in praise of Alexander the Great'.[22] However, the poem is not without a critical voice, and that is perhaps not unexpected: after all, if Alexander's rise had God's blessing, then it is something of an inconvenient truth that he is struck down at the height of his power. The natural assumption is that his fall must also be part of God's plan, which invites consideration of Alexander's faults, to see on what grounds that fall might be deserved.[23] The first real explicit criticism of Alexander comes in stanza 1862, when Alexander's decision not to have Nabarzanes killed for his murderous betrayal of Darius is roundly condemned by the poet, who consistently sees treachery as a grievous offence worthy of the harshest punishment.[24] Indeed, it is tempting to see Alexander's own death at a traitor's hands as poetic justice following his failure to administer a proper penalty here, given the severe view he offered in the aftermath of Darius' death:

> ¡el que nunca ovier' merçed al träidor,
> nunca aver le quiera merçed el Crïador! (1789cd)
>
> (Anyone who ever shows mercy to a traitor,
> may the Creator never have mercy on him!)

However, criticism of this kind is short-lived, and the poet quickly returns to a positive view of his protagonist in the description of Alexander's encounter with the Amazon queen, Thalestris (1863–88). A more

22 Fraker 1988, 364–5 (364). 23 See Michael 1970, 282–3; cf. Cary 1956, 103–5.
24 On this introduction of an openly negative judgement of Alexander see Michael 1970, 144–5.

pronounced shift in the poem's attitude comes after Alexander's defeat of Porus, when the Greek king aims to set out once more on a new set of adventures, seeking to cross the sea into lands untouched by man and to find the mysterious source of the Nile, which leads his men to express concern at his insatiable appetite (2269–95). It is true that the men do not reject his plans here, as they do eventually agree to follow him, and the poet remains able to express admiration of Alexander for the fearlessness he shows in the ensuing sea voyage.[25] Yet these lines nonetheless mark a clear shift in emphasis, as Alexander's men raise doubts about his moral character, claiming that his plans constitute 'presumption' ('valitana', 2270d) and labelling his desire for further expeditions a kind of greed ('cobdiçia', 2274a). Indeed, that criticism is apparently reinforced by Alexander's own view of his achievements here:

> Dizen las escripturas – yo leí el tratado –
> que siete son los mundos que Dïos ovo dado.
> De los siete, el uno apenas es domado:
> ¡por esto yo non conto que nada he ganado! (2289)
>
> (So say the texts – I have read the treatise –
> that the worlds that God created are seven;
> of the seven, scarcely one have I conquered
> and therefore I count my gains as nothing.)

If various prophecies had attested to Alexander's providential support for his historical conquests, these lines begin to suggest his discontent with even that fated portion of success, as the prophesied dominion over all the earth would still not slake his ambition, which in turn reinforces his men's allegations of their leader's susceptibility to greed. This exchange thus serves to bring Alexander's possible moral failings into the spotlight, and they will be further explored in the sections of the poem which immediately follow it: the account of Alexander's legendary descent beneath the seas, and a long description of Nature's descent into hell in protest at Alexander's violation of natural law, in a passage which amounts to a bravura expansion of Nature's similar *katabasis* in the *Alexandreis*.

However, this suggests two related questions which merit further attention before considering the significance of those two substantial episodes – namely, the precise nature of Alexander's moral shortcoming,

25 See 2302cd: '¡Fizo Dïos gran cosa en tal omne crïar, | que no lo podién ondas iradas espantar!' ('God did a great thing in creating such a man | that he could not be frightened by the angry waves.')

and the extent of the overlap between the Spanish poem and Gautier's *Alexandreis* in their respective treatments of it. Hispanists have often pointed to the *Alexandre*'s moralising perspective as a significant locus of innovation over the Latin poem, holding that 'the didactic and moralizing dimension of the Spanish poem is fundamental, an essential aspect of its internal structure, and that is a defining feature which both marks it out as a *mester de clerecía* poem and simultaneously distinguishes it from medieval Latin epic, which lacks that moral, pedagogical side'.[26] Yet Glynn Meter's commentary on the tenth and final book of the *Alexandreis* draws attention to the poet's repeated concern with Alexander overstepping Nature's limits in his quest to find the Nile's source or the Antipodes, which is precisely what he intends at *Alexandre* 2269–70 and 2293, while Maura Lafferty further notes that as the *Alexandreis* presents it, Alexander's role in the divine plan is over when he kills Darius, and his subsequent attempts to extend his rule beyond Ocean thus take him outside that legitimate sphere of action and lead only to his own death.[27] The two poems might thus be seen to be more similar than is commonly allowed, as the *Alexandre* poet finds in Gautier the seeds for a reading of Alexander's moral fault which he begins to emphasise at this point in his work. Moreover, critics have tended to see the Spanish Alexander as a figure of pride, although Bly and Deyermond's important study takes greed to be his 'one major flaw', just as Alexander's own followers implied.[28] Yet the comparison with Gautier suggests that the underlying fault here may really be that of overreaching, and it is surely significant that the Spanish poem begins to emphasise criticism of Alexander just when he articulates his discontent with what he has been granted by fortune, and begins to cast his eye beyond the legitimate conquests of this world. Such a reading also dovetails well with hints of this kind of potential failing that are briefly visible earlier in the poem, as his men once again expressed similar anxiety about Alexander's ambition exceeding God's will at 1204–5:

[26] 'La dimensión didáctica y moralizante del poema castellano es fundamental, es un elemento esencial de la estructura interna, y eso lo caracteriza y lo señala como un poema del "mester de clerecía", y, a la vez, lo separa y distingue de la épica latino-medieval, la cual no tiene esa dimensión moral y pedagógica' (Uría Maqua 2000, 212).

[27] On the moralising purpose of *Alexandreis* 10 and the concern about exceeding limits set by Nature see Meter 1991, 7–11, 88, 97–8, 128–30, 141, 261 and *passim*; on Alexander's role in 'God's divine plan' see Lafferty 1994, 80.

[28] Bly and Deyermond 1972, 160.

Dizién: '¡Rey Alexandre, nunca devriés naçer,
que con todo el mundo quieres guerra tener!
¡Los çielos e las tierras quieres yus' ti meter!
¡Lo que Dios non quïere tú lo cuedas aver!

Tanto avemos ganado quanto nunca cuidamos;
quanto más conquerimos, tanto más cobdiçiamos.
¡Traemos grant sobervia, mesura non catamos!:
avremos a prender aún lo que buscamos!'

(They said: "King Alexander, you should never have been born,
for you want to wage war against the whole world
and set Heaven and Earth beneath your power;
what God does not will, you seek to make yours.

We have won more than we ever thought we could,
but the more we conquered the more we craved;
we have great arrogance but no sense of measure;
we shall still take what we seek for ourselves.)

Crucially, these lines imply that the various conceptions of Alexander's fault noted earlier are interlinked, as a lack of 'mesura' (measure) is associated in 1205 with both *cobdiçia* and *sobervia*, the two vices of which Alexander is principally accused. Moreover, 1204 implies that this lack of restraint is essentially manifest in the risk of seeking conquests which go beyond what God has willed – a view echoed later by messengers who come to Alexander from Scythia, and whose speech at 1918–39 is fundamental for the identification of Alexander's fault:

Lo que a Dios pediste bien lo has acabado:
de Dario eres quito; de Bessus, bien vengado.
¡Levántate del juego mientre estás honrado!:
¡si se camia la mano, serás bien rebidado! (1922)

(What you asked of God, you have brought to full conclusion:
free of debt to Darius, you are well avenged on Bessus.
Come away from the game, while you still have honour:
if your hand changes you will be firmly cast down.)

Clearly the Scythians have their own agenda here in seeking to persuade Alexander to leave them in peace. Their logic, however, fits exactly with the other hints of Alexander's fault we have seen so far. In all these examples the essential issue seems to be a potential desire for conquest which exceeds what God has permitted, as was also the case in Gautier; that overreaching may then

easily be conceptualised as either greed or pride, as Alexander thinks himself worthy of more than what providence has allotted. The Scythians of course misrepresent here the extent of divine support for Alexander: their lines tacitly assume that Alexander's initial desire to throw off the Persian yoke (stanzas 21–31) is the extent of his legitimate ambition, but we have seen that the dream-prophecy outlined above has in fact suggested potential dominion over the entire world. It is thus no surprise that their petition fails. However, the logic underpinning the Scythian position aligns well with the other passages analysed here to warn the reader that Alexander's ambition may well reach beyond what providence allows, leaving him vulnerable to the vices of greed and pride, and that is what begins to come to the fore as the poem's critical voice emerges more strongly from stanza 2269 onwards.

A second, related facet of Alexander's prideful error is also worth consideration before returning to the poem's account of his submarine voyage. The *Alexandre* poet is repeatedly concerned to emphasise the transient nature of earthly success, which should not therefore be held in too high regard, since it will inevitably pass. This is of course a typical Christian warning against *vanitas* and advocacy of *contemptus mundi*, but the link to pride may be neatly illustrated by Darius himself, in the *Historia de proeliis*, addressing Alexander at the moment of his own death:

> If God had made all prosperous things to abide immutable among men, so great would be the pride and vainglory dominating their hearts that they would attribute all their prosperity not to the gods but to their own excellence, and thus men would grow distant from their creator. . . . Just as you have seen in my case, I had grown so fat with pride because of the abundant riches which I possessed that I believed myself to be not God's creature but his partner. What I did not see then in the blindness of my pride now I see and understand through the clear-sightedness of my humiliation. . . . My son, let not your mind be lifted up into pride because of the victories granted you by God![29]

The transience of worldly affairs is thus a deliberate ploy to stop man overestimating his own excellence, but a failure to keep that in mind makes men forget that their success is a gift from God, and leads in turn to pride; men such as Darius and Alexander, to whom such immeasurable

[29] *Historia de proeliis* (I^3) 2.20; translation quoted from Kratz 1991, 92–3. Recension I^1 includes at this point a speech on the same topic, but Darius' focus there is on a warning against exulting in glorious achievements, because fortunes can change in an instant; it therefore lacks the explicit link to pride which helps to illustrate how Alexander's errors may overlap. I am not suggesting that I^3 was the source for the Spanish poet, however; merely that it articulates clearly the risk of pride to which worldly success makes rulers like Darius and Alexander prone, which throws the *Alexandre*'s treatment of this topic into sharper relief.

success has been granted, must therefore be particularly at risk of that sin. The Spanish poet does not quite follow the *Historia de proeliis* here, as Darius is killed before Alexander reaches him and thus denied a dying address to his enemy, but the elements of this speech are clearly visible nonetheless. Concern with transience is frequent, but prominently articulated by Darius in a long battle speech which includes an account of the wheel of Fortune (1652–5), though the purpose of that reference is realigned to tragic effect, as Darius sees himself at the wheel's nadir and is therefore confident of an imminent rise, but the speech is instead immediately followed by the treachery of Bessus and Nabazarnes being set in train. However, the sense that a moral may be drawn from Darius' death is removed to a different context, and is articulated not by Darius himself, but by the poet; this is clearest on the occasion of Darius' burial, which prompts an extended reflection on shifting fortune, the risks of greed and flattery which come with success but can lead to ruin, and the interpretation of Darius' fall as an example of the limitations of worldly power (1805–13). Nor is Darius the only such example presented to Alexander, as Porus does address the Greek king with his dying words, admitting that he thought he would never be vanquished (2211) and openly citing himself and Darius as *exempla*:

> A ti lo quiero esto, Alexandre, esponer:
> alto estás agora en somo del clocher;
> ¡non seas segurado que non puedas caer,
> ca son fado e viento malos de retener!
>
> Puede qui lo quisiere esto bien escrevir,
> de Dario e de Poro enxemplo adozir:
> 'Ovieron de grant gloria a cuita a venir:
> natura es del mundo deçender e sobir'. (2213–14)
>
> (To you, Alexander, do I want to explain this:
> you are now on high, at the top of the tower;
> but do not be convinced that you cannot fall,
> for fate and the wind are hard to hold back.
>
> Anyone who wishes can set this all in writing
> and bring forward the examples of Darius and Porus
> who had great glory, but were to come to suffer:
> it is the nature of the world to rise and fall.)

Both these victories should thus warn Alexander of the dangers of human achievement, which should be seen as transitory and within God's gift, but easily lead to pride when great feats are prized on their own terms, and the doer

overestimates his role in bringing them about.[30] Moreover, a failure to grasp this is not easily separated from the aforementioned concerns about overreaching, since both faults leave Alexander open to greed and to pride, as excessive esteem for his achievements and for his own role in bringing them about leave him discontented with the measure of success apportioned him by fortune, and eager to go in search of more. The root of Alexander's mistake may thus be framed as an improper conception of worldly success and its relationship to providence, whose dictates he will eventually seek to transgress. Importantly too he does so despite the existence within the poem of potential models from whose fate he could learn this lesson; this blindness to his own failings is a recurring theme in the more critical section of the poem, to which I now return.

This moral background is made explicit in the account of Alexander's descent in the bathysphere, which immediately follows that discussion with his men where the poem's critical view of its hero begins to gain traction (2305–23). Indeed, the poet is clear from the outset that this legendary tale constitutes a departure from his trusted sources, as it does not figure in the *Alexandreis*, and he includes it despite having reservations over its veracity:

> Una fazaña suelen las gentes retraer;
> non yaze en escripto: es malo de creer.
> Si es verdat o non, yo non he ý qué fer,
> maguer non la quïero en olvido poner. (2305)
>
> (Of one great exploit do people often tell
> – it lies not in writing and is hard to believe –;
> if it is true or false I cannot determine,
> though I do not wish to let it be forgotten.)

The episode must therefore be worthy of inclusion on other grounds, and the best candidate for such a reason is the light it sheds on Alexander's moral fault.[31] The likelihood of such a reading has already been suggested too by the Scythians' prophetic warnings about the extent of Alexander's thirst for conquest:

> ¡Quando oviesses los pueblos todos sobjudgados,
> iriés çercar los mares, conquerir los pescados;

[30] On Alexander's embodiment of both pride and the instability of worldly achievement, the relationship of his pride to an inability to take account of his own impermanence, and his similarities to Darius in this regard see further Weiss 2006, 110–20.

[31] Michael 1960, 207–8.

quebrantar los Infiernos, que yazen sofondados;
conquerir los antípodes, que non sabes ón' son nados! (1920)

(When you had won dominion over all the world's peoples,
you would go to besiege the seas and master the fish,
and you would go to lay waste to the sunken depths of Hell
and conquer the Antipodes, whose birthplace you know not.)

These premonitions all recur in close order in the more critical section of the poem, as the submarine episode is preceded by the desire to conquer the Antipodes (2293) and followed by Nature's long descent into Hell, which prompts Satan to fear that Alexander will come to drive out its inhabitants (2440). The reader of the Spanish poem is thus clearly prepared to see the descent beneath the seas as an example of Alexander overreaching his remit, and although this is most easily read as an excessive desire for knowledge leading him to venture beyond the limits prescribed for man, it is described in terms which recall the Scythians' lexis of conquest, and thus metaphorically shows Alexander attempting to conquer more than what providence had authorised.[32] As we expect, overreaching his proper 'measure' like this leaves Alexander vulnerable to pride, but this episode also constitutes an excellent example of his moral blindness, as the Greek king condemns the fish for exhibiting precisely that sin which he fails to observe in his own conduct:

Diz'el rëy: '¡Sobervia es en todos lugares!:
es fuerça en la tierra e dentro en los mares;
las aves esso mismo non se catan por pares.
¡Dios confonda tal viçio que tien' tantos lugares!

Naçió entre los ángeles: fizo muchos caer;
derramó por la tierra, diole Dios grant poder.
La mesura non puede su derecho aver:
ascondió su cabeça, non osa pareçer.' (2317–18)

(The King said, 'Pride exists in every place;
it is a force on earth and within the seas;
likewise, birds do not see themselves as equals.
May God confound a vice that so many places have!

[32] See for example 2314ab: 'Tanto se acogién al rëy los pescados | como si oviés' por armas sobjudgados' ('So much did the fish gather round the King | it was as if he had subdued them by arms'); 2315d: '¡contava que avié grant imperio ganado!' ('he considered that he had won a great empire').

> It was born among the angels and made many fall.
> It spread over the earth and God gave it great power.
> Moderation is not able to take its rightful place:
> it has hidden its head and it dares not appear.')

The poet leaves no doubt over his hypocrisy in this regard (2321), and this prompts another digression from the tale of Alexander's life, as the poet pauses his narrative to explore Alexander's pride in more detail (2324). The ensuing moral digression provides unambiguous confirmation of the reading of Alexander's fault outlined above: Alexander's conquests were not simply his achievements, but a gift from God; yet in his excursion beneath the seas, he is attempting something beyond that gift, as it is beyond any man:

> Aviele Dïos dado los regnos en so poder:
> non se le podié fuerça ninguna defender.
> Querié saber los mares, los Infiernos veer,
> lo que non podié omne nunca acabeçer. (2328)

> (God had granted him the kingdoms under his sway,
> and no force could defend itself against him;
> he sought to know the seas and see the infernal depths,
> things which no man could ever manage to achieve.)

This then triggers the strongest condemnation of all, as words of rancour are spoken by the Creator himself, who rebukes Alexander for his lack of 'mesura' in overreaching here, and for his hypocrisy in criticising the fish for the very sin of pride of which he is himself guilty. The poem's twin voices of praise and blame are thus both made to rest on divine support, as the grounds for this shift in emphasis after the defeat of Porus are now made clear: as long as Alexander's conquests were in line with providence, his presentation was generally positive, with only occasional hints of criticism; as he here steps recklessly beyond that remit, however, the balance shifts, and those hints of potential rebuke grow into something much stronger.

This explicit criticism from God is also what triggers Nature's descent into Hell, as she infers from it that she has divine support for her grievances (2331) and goes to find Satan in order to seek redress. The resulting journey has its roots in the similar descent to the underworld in *Alexandreis* 10.31–167, but is much expanded by the Spanish poet into a vast set-piece description of Hell and a taxonomy of the deadly sins (2334–2423), before Nature petitions Satan and Treachery offers a plan to bring Alexander's downfall through his death at

the hands of Antipater (2424–57). This long scene therefore offers a prime example of that practice of Christianisation, as the *Alexandre* expands significantly on Gautier's account with detailed material from Christian tradition.[33] I focus here on two features of this account which serve to reinforce the view of Alexander consistently advanced in this section of the poem: an overreacher who tips into greed and pride. The first of these is Nature's complaint against him, which is most clearly articulated at 2431–3; once again, his fault is not being content with his conquests, as he sought to expose those secrets of nature into which no man ought to pry:

> Non lo osan los rëys en campo esperar;
> non lo pueden las bestias nin las sierpes durar;
> temen la su espada todos de mar a mar:
> ¡non es omne naçido que'l pueda contrastar!
>
> Non se tovo por esto encara por pagado:
> ¡el secreto del mar ha todo escodriñado!
> Por todos los peligros nunca fue quebrantado:
> ¡encara öy día está más apagado!
>
> ¡Quando non falla cosa que'l pueda contrastar,
> dizen que los Infiernos quier' venir destrañar!:
> ¡todos los mis secretos quier' despaladinar!;
> ¡a mí e a vós todos en cadenas levar!
>
> (Kings dare not await him on the field of battle,
> nor can beasts or snakes endure against him;
> from sea to sea all men are in fear of his sword
> and there is no man born who can oppose him.
>
> Not even with this did he think himself satisfied:
> he has pried into all the secrets of the sea
> and was never brought to harm by any of its perils;
> and what is more, he is at present quite elated.
>
> As he can find nothing that can resist him,
> they say he wants to spy into the depths of Hell;
> he desires to lay open all of my secrets
> and to carry off the two of us in chains.)

Moreover, Florence Curtis has recently observed that the phrasing here recalls that used in Alexander's prophetic dream, which foretold his sovereignty over the whole world, as the repeated 'que'l puede contrastar'

[33] See Michael 1970, 114 and especially 1965.

(2431d, 2433a) echoes the second hemistich of 1157d.[34] The legitimate extent of Alexander's providential conquest is thus subtly recalled precisely as Nature accuses him of stepping beyond those limits, and this unfettered desire for conquest is again behind Satan's fear that Alexander will wage a campaign against Hell itself (2440). Once more, this focus on Alexander as overreaching rather than simply prideful fits well with the poem's roots in the *Alexandreis* too, since Gautier's work makes clear that Nature has deliberately hidden the Antipodes away from all mortals, and Alexander's search for them thus clearly transgresses the boundaries she has imposed.[35] Reading Alexander's error in this way thus suggests once more that the two poems are fundamentally more similar than is sometimes allowed in their presentations of the Macedonian king, as the Spanish poem may be seen as an expansion of the *Alexandreis*' kindred approach.

The second relevant section here is a long description of allegorical figures representing the seven deadly sins and related vices, all dwelling in Hell. This is again an expansion of the *Alexandreis*, which describes a host of vices figured as 'livid sisters' (10.32) who dwell in the underworld; the Spanish poet alters the vices involved, however, listing seven 'viçios cabdales', the deadly sins (2345d), along with their subordinates, and pride, which is depicted last and separately, as the queen of all vice. In presenting seven listed vices underpinned by pride, the *Alexandre* poet is in line with the influential account of Gregory the Great (*Moralia in Job* 31.45.87–90), and this is an obvious example of the Spanish poem drawing more conspicuously on the details of Christian tradition than its Latin source had done.[36] However, Gregory's ordering is not reproduced here, as the *Alexandre* follows Gautier in placing Avarice at the head of the list, preserving her status as the 'mother' of the others (*Alexandreis* 10.33; *Alexandre* 2346b). In Gautier's hands, that was clearly a device to suggest her primacy, and the *Alexandre*'s fusion of this conceit with the parallel strategy of labelling Pride as the queen seems designed to imply the prominence of both these two vices, which bookend this difficult taxonomy of sin. Scholars have long seen the emphasis on Pride as a reflection of its

[34] See Curtis 2014, 57–8. [35] *Alexandreis* 9.574–5; cf. Lafferty 1994, 65–7.

[36] The question of which of the sins listed constitute the seven 'cabdales' is not straightforward: I follow Casas Rigall 2007, 650, reading them as Avarice/Greed, Envy, Anger, Lust, Gluttony, Accidy and Vainglory; alternatively, see Michael 1965, 224–5. This reading rests on treating Avarice and Greed as twin descriptions of a single sin, which is implied by the details of the account: Anger is listed explicitly as the third sin (2356a), following two of Avarice, Greed and Envy, while only Greed, Envy and Anger are listed in the first of the brief recapitulations of the sins treated so far at 2371, suggesting that Avarice and Greed are implicitly considered together (cf. 2399, a later recapitulation where similar logic should be applied).

status as Alexander's sin, but the mother-sin of Avarice deliberately preserved from Gautier should not be downplayed. However, any difficulties caused by this apparent twin primacy are mitigated by the account of Alexander's fault outlined here, whereby the overreaching that has prompted Nature's descent causes Alexander to sin in exactly the two ways this section is thus structured to highlight.[37] The details of this descriptive passage thus serve to reinforce the moralising grounds on which Alexander is criticised in this section of the poem, in a long scene prompted by the censure of God himself.

However, this critical voice does not continue unmodulated until the poem's close. After Treachery concocts the scheme that will bring Alexander's death, the narrative leaves Hell and focuses once more on the King himself, who resolves to return to Babylon, offering the poet a chance to describe the many wonders encountered on the journey (2458–2515). Principal among these is the legendary episode of Alexander's gryphon-aided flight (2496–2515). Initially, the natural expectation is for this episode to be a companion piece to the submarine voyage: the Scythians mention an ascent into the clouds as part of their warning against excessive conquest (1921), while other treatments of it in the Alexander tradition fit well with this moralising approach, as the *Alexander Romance* (2.41) sees an angel rebuke him for exploring the heavens, after which he resolves not to attempt the impossible again; the *Historia de proeliis* has no such rebuke, but sees Alexander forcibly thrown from the skies by a divine force (I^1 3.27). However, the Scythians' claim that Alexander would usurp the role of the sun comes to nothing, and the kind of forthright criticism that marked the submarine descent is notable by its absence here, as there is no parallel to the *Romance*'s admonishing angel; unlike the *Historia de proeliis*, the Spanish poem also gives Alexander an unhindered flight, where he surveys the world until he is sated and returns smoothly to earth (2514). Moreover, whereas the *Romance* has Alexander see the world in the form of a snake coiled around a threshing floor, the *Alexandre* poet offers an image of the world shaped as a man. This has been read in a more positive light, implying that Alexander's flight allows him to regain a true, Christian perspective, and thereby expiates his pride.[38] Yet is perhaps difficult to see Alexander's sin as fully expiated here: no attention is obviously drawn to such a reading, and his desire to ascend to the skies is just the same kind of zeal for knowledge that

[37] There is of course no issue with Alexander being simultaneously guilty of two sins, but in this respect it is interesting that a parallel is offered by Adam, whose role in original sin is presented within this section of the poem as an example of both gluttony (2382a) and pride (2409c).

[38] See Willis 1956–7, 222; Curtis 2014, 63 n. 66.

prompted the submarine episode, while the incursion into the air surely transgresses Nature's boundaries in the same way that so irked her in his waterborne expedition. Nonetheless, if the potential fault remains the same, it is significant that the poet is much less trenchant in his presentation of it. Where the bathysphere prompted strident censure, there is no such response to Alexander's flight, despite the potential for such criticism that other versions of the scene might offer; instead, a smooth landing brings the episode to a close (2514) before the poet returns easily to Alexander's glorious worldly power:

> La ventura del rëy, que lo querié guïar
> ante que d'esti mundo oviesse a passar,
> en el poder del mundo quísolo acabar,
> mas ovo assaz poco en esso a durar. (2515)
>
> (The King's good fortune, which wished to be his guide,
> before that man was to pass from this world,
> wished to make his worldly power complete,
> though he was to keep it for a short enough time.)

This section thus perhaps marks another shift in the poem: we have seen Alexander's overreaching and the moral comeuppance he will bear for it; that is not forgotten, as his imminent death is recalled in 2515d, but our focus has returned to the licit, worldly supremacy which was earlier the basis for praise, and which is still shown to have the Creator's approbation at 2517a, notwithstanding the intervening exploration of Alexander's faults. This episode thus lays the groundwork for the poem's close, in which the twin voices of praise and blame consistently coexist: the renewed focus on worldly hegemony allows celebration of Alexander's great triumph as world ruler, yet his moral failings and the impending disaster of his death to which they lead are not forgotten even at the height of this celebration.

It is therefore no surprise that this final section of the poem, where Alexander's status as master of the world is confirmed in Babylon but Antipater also succeeds in procuring his death, frequently juxtaposes praise of Alexander with reminders of his moral failings or his imminent fall. Thus, for example, his total hegemony is announced in stanza 2528, and he naturally makes haste to Babylon to receive his tribute, yet it is still a kind of 'cobdiçia' which drives him there, and we are instantly reminded of the mortal trap Nature is about to spring on him (2529cd); similarly, his new subjects thank God for giving them such a fine leader (2536ab), but the

traitor's scheme is recalled within the same stanza (2536d). This approach fits neatly with the logic of the wheel of Fortune too – recalled once more with Darius as an example of its shifts at 2532 – whereby the highest point is at once the most glorious and the most vulnerable position. The most striking example, however, is the ekphrastic depiction of Alexander's tent, where he will receive his tributes: this is a monument to the splendour of worldly achievement, a celebration of Alexander's divinely guided feats along with other illustrations including scenes from sacred and secular history and a map of the world (2539–95). Yet even here the critical voice intrudes, as the tent's first scenes all depict figures of pride, including Lucifer, Adam and Eve, and the giants who built the tower of Babel (2550–2); even this crowning emblem of Alexander's success thus contains an echo of the sin that undermines him.[39] It is the coexistence of these two voices which really marks the scene of Alexander's final triumph: glory is legitimately his, having now won mastery of the world as providence foretold; yet the consequences of his overreaching are never far from our minds here – his greed, his pride and his imminent death, the last conceived in response to Nature's divinely sanctioned complaint and knocking Alexander from the height of his fortune, as had happened to Darius and Porus before him. The real criticism of Alexander for his overreaching faults is thus concentrated into the section between the dialogue with his men begun at 2269 and the end of the Hell scene; indeed, once that scene makes Alexander's imminent death explicit, the poet is moved to lament the passing of a man as great as Alexander, reintroducing the positive voice which is balanced against that criticism until the poem's close.[40]

This double-voiced presentation continues into the description of Alexander's death: this is clearly presented as God's will (2620a, 2647ab), as we expect from the earlier divine condemnation of Alexander's prideful overreaching which prompted Nature's journey to seek his murder; yet the poet remains unmoved in his conviction that the world is being robbed of a 'precious flower' ('flor preçiosa', 2602c) and that Alexander's death is 'the world's misfortune' ('Por ocasión del mundo', 2611a). Once again, an awareness of his flaw does not obviate his positive qualities, and the poem is thus free to

[39] See further Michael 1970, 266–9; Weiss 2006, 141.

[40] See especially 2457: '¡Quieres toller del mundo una grant claredat!: | ¡quieres tornar a Greçia a grant tenebredat! | ¡Traïdor! ¿por qué amas tan fiera malvestat? | ¡Guárdate que non fagas con Bessus hermandat!'. ('You [=Antipater] wish to take away a great light from the world, | and you wish to plunge Greece back into darkness. | You traitor, why do you love such great wickedness? | Beware lest you make yourself a brother to Bessus!')

paint his death as a tragic downfall, following the reintroduction of that voice of praise.[41] However, these elements of affection and esteem for Alexander have also been marshalled as evidence in a long-standing controversy over the fate of Alexander's soul.[42] Yet whereas we have seen good reason to think Alexander's faults responsible for his worldly fall, the poem is much less explicit on his possible salvation; moreover, that question surely rests in part on humility and repentance, or realising his own error, but the admiration of Alexander does little to suggest that. His very last words do state that he renounces the world (2645cd), and that may imply a late shift in perspective towards the kind of humility that might save his soul even though his worldly power is already lost, but supporting evidence for such a significant claim is not easy to come by. Moreover, earlier in that same speech, Alexander's perspective had not seemed so virtuous:

> Suélense en un rato   las cosas demudar;
> el cavallo ligero   suele entrepeçar:
> ¡si sola una onta   oviesse a tomar,
> avrié todo mi preçio   en nada a tornar!
>
> El omne que se passa   mientre está honrado,
> ésse dizen los sabios   que es aventurado.
> Si se va acostando,   trastórnase privado:
> ¡todo va agua ayuso   quanto que ha lazrado!
>
> Seré del Rey del Çielo   altamente reçebido:
> quando a mí oviere,   teners'ha por guarido.
> Seré en la su corte   honrado e servido:
> ¡todos me laudarán   porque non fue vençido! (2629–31)
>
> (In just a short time things are given to change
> and the fleet-footed horse often stumbles;
> if I were to suffer one single act of shame
> all my renown would turn to nothing.
>
> Of the man who passes on whilst he is in honour,
> the wise men say that he enjoys good fortune.
> If he begins to decline, he is quickly brought down,
> and all that he has suffered is carried downstream.

[41] On the poet's evident regret and Alexander's tale as a tragedy see further Michael 1970, 278; Bly and Deyermond 1972, 179.

[42] The most convinced case for Alexander's damnation is Michael 1960; 1970, 107–11; for a more recent inclination towards his salvation see for example Casas Rigall 2007, 67–8.

I shall be warmly received by the King of Heaven,
and when He has me, He will feel Himself protected.
In His court, I shall be honoured and well served,
and all will praise me, for I suffered no defeat.)

Alexander thus offers his own comment on the rise-and-fall motif whereby triumph quickly turns to disaster, which is so much in evidence during this final section of the poem. Yet that does not prompt him to reflect on his place in the order of things as Darius suggested he should in the *Historia de proeliis*, seeing himself as 'God's creature' and thus displaying a humility that might reinforce our perception of his chances of salvation. Instead, he offers his own take on the logic of the wheel of Fortune: not using the inevitable fall from prominence as a spur to humility, but being pleased to avoid such a fall altogether by departing while his fortune is at its height. On that basis, he is convinced of his own salvation, yet we surely do not take his logic as sound, while his claim that God will be safer in Heaven when Alexander joins him seems an example of precisely what the Darius of the *Historia de proeliis* warned against, overplaying his own worth and seeing himself as 'not God's creature but his partner'. It is hard not to hear in this speech a final echo of the pride to which his overreaching has so consistently made him vulnerable. Amidst the heartfelt laments at the passing of so great a leader, Alexander's own words might thus offer a final glimpse of the moral flaw which ultimately brought his worldly downfall, as the man who mastered the entire world ultimately failed to master himself.

The poem concludes with a brief epilogue drawing a familiar moral lesson from Alexander's life: that earthly glory is transitory and prone to being snatched away when a man thinks himself safest; the proper response is now clearly articulated as an attitude of *contemptus mundi*, for only devotion to the service of God can bring salvation, while all other glories will fade (2670–1). Alexander, whose glories no man could match, thus becomes the paradigmatic figure of *vanitas* (2672), embodying the lesson he himself failed to heed from the examples of Darius and Porus. The poem is clear that his rise and his fall both form part of providential design, citing as a basis for the latter the sins of greed and pride to which his essential overreaching left him susceptible. Yet what distinguishes his presentation here is that his fall does not obviate his rise, as his positive qualities are not forgotten in the wake of his moral failings. The Spanish Alexander is both celebrated for his triumphs and censored for his shortcomings, and it is the coexistence of these two

voices of praise and blame which ultimately allows the poet to portray his downfall as deserved, but lamentable nonetheless.[43]

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[43] I am grateful to Peter Such for his comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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12 The Persian Alexander (1)

The Royal Alexander

HAILA MANTEGHI

آیینه ی سکندر جام جم است بنگر تا بر تو عرضه دارد احوال ملک دارا

The holy grail of Jamshid is just
the same as Alexander's looking glass;
So look therein if you would contemplate
the affairs of the kingdom of Darius.

Ḥāfeẓ (d. 1390)[1]

It has been widely discussed that in the Persian tradition Alexander had two different reception histories, which might even have existed in parallel.[2] He was considered a cursed figure who set fire to the holy scriptures of the Persians, razed their fire temples and generally destroyed the entire country, and he is thus viewed as one of the greatest enemies of historical Iran. He was also a Persian king and hero, a slayer of dragons who had strange adventures resembling those of Esfandiyār and Kay Khosrow. This chapter endeavours to highlight two characteristics of the Persian tradition concerning the heroic aspect of Alexander.

Firstly, there is a parallelism and rapprochement of Alexander's character to Kay Khosrow. Not only does Alexander possess a magic mirror similar to Kay Khosrow's magic goblet (*jām-i jahānbīn-e Kay Khosrow*, also known as *jām-e Jam*), but he also experiences adventures similar to those found in the Kay Khosrow passages of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma*. This chapter argues the royal Alexander was modelled on Kay Khosrow, and also endeavours to explain why.

Secondly, this chapter investigates certain thematic elements of Alexander's adventures which were transferred to other heroes, especially those of the Sistāni epic cycle (i.e. Garshāsp and Farāmarz, son of Rostam). It is no coincidence that Farāmarz's exploits belong to the reign of Kay Khosrow. It seems that this body of literature was the product of the same period. Here we examine how some aspects of the *Alexander Romance* came to be applied to other heroes.

[1] Ḥāfeẓ 1381/2002, *ghazal* 3. [2] See Wiesehöfer 2011, especially 114, n. 3; Rubanovich 2016.

The Persian *Alexander Romances*

As scholarship has shown, the Persian *Alexander Romances* were based on the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, which was probably translated into Middle Persian from Syriac at the end of the Sasanian period.[3] This material was integrated into the 'national epic' as part of Iranian history in the *X*^{w}*adāy-nāmag* (*Book of Sovereigns*) and thus found its way into the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdowsi and is also reflected in the works of early Islamic historians, geographers and the Persian versions of the *Alexander Romance*. In this process, Alexander became the half-brother of Dārā, the last Kayānid king, through the marriage of Dārāb and Nāhid, Philip's daughter.

However, this was not the end of making Alexander a legitimate king on the throne of Persia. Despite the hostile attitude of the Zoroastrian priesthood, who never acknowledged the Macedonian conqueror, court historians attempted to justify Alexander's kingship of Persia, inventing stories to support his legitimacy. From this point of view, one of the most interesting but less studied characteristics of Alexander in the Persian tradition is his assimilation to Kay Khosrow, the legendary king of the Kayānid epic cycle, who bears a great resemblance to the Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia*.[4] In order to study this parallel, I provide the development of Alexander's Persianisation.

Alexander and Kay Khosrow

Three common elements in the accounts of Kay Khosrow and Alexander establish the connection between these two kings. First, there are similar legends around the circumstances of their birth; secondly, they both possess a magical instrument which enables them to see the unseen or the whole world – Kay Khosrow a cup (*jām*) and Alexander a mirror – finally, the throne and the act of enthronement serve as a symbolic metaphor of the legitimisation of kingship. These three elements can be found elsewhere in

[3] Doufikar-Aerts states that this topic will receive new attention from the Syriast Jan van Ginkel within the framework of her research programme 'Beyond the European Myth. In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle and the Transnational Migration of Ideas and Concepts of Culture and Identity' at the Free University of Amsterdam. See Doufikar-Aerts 2016, 191, n. 10. Until the results of this research are published, this is the most recent hypothesis.

[4] See Duleba 1995; Khaleghi-Motlagh 1374/1995.

the sources, but it is Niẓāmi who provides the best example of this assimilation.

Circumstances of Birth

Persian tradition provides several variants of Alexander's ancestry which are very well summarised by Niẓāmi in the *Sharafnāma*, the first part of the *Iskandarnāma*. He mentions the Persian ancestry variant (i.e. Alexander as the half-brother of Dārā), the *rumi* variant (i.e. Alexander as an exposed child) and finally the Greek variant (i.e. Alexander as Philip's son).[5] The variant of the exposed child is of interest here. According to the *Dārābnāma* of Ṭarsusi, Alexander's mother gives birth to him in secret, and to avoid a scandal she leaves him on the mountain where Aristotle lives in a retreat. Alexander is nursed by a goat and guarded by a lion until an old woman eventually finds him. The woman feeds him and raises him under Aristotle's guidance.[6] Niẓāmi includes a similar story:

> As has been related by the wise sages of that land,
> There was once the wife of a pious man in Greece[7]
> Who found herself distressed in pangs of childbirth
> Outcast from hearth, home, husband – in dire straits.
> When the time to give birth approached, the strain
> And labour's woe overmastered her with pain.
> She crept off into a corner, gave birth and died.
> She fret to death in the distress of childbirth and cried:
> 'Who shall nurse and nurture you, I know not;
> What beast or brute will devour you, who knows.'[8]

Philip then finds the abandoned child on his way back from a hunting expedition:

> One day while hunting game, King Philip surveyed
> The plain and saw a dead woman lying there
> Before his feet, a living baby boy's head rose up
> From his mother's deathbed; in want of her breast
> And milk the infant bit his thumb in grief.
> Philip ordered his men to take the lady's corpse
> They gave to her last rites as she deserved.

[5] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 80–4. [6] Ṭarsusi 1344/1965, I.387–92.

[7] Niẓāmi uses the term *Hūshyārān-i Rūm* (lit. 'wise Anatolian/Roman? sages') here, but given the context it seems more likely his reference is to Greek or Byzantine historians who wrote about Alexander.

[8] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 81, XV.16–20.

The servants of the king took the child from
The dust of the way and bore him away –
All were left to marvel at the game of that day.
So Philip took, reared and raised the boy,
And in the end anointed him his heir.[9]

The motif of the exposed child is also familiar in the Mesopotamian and Persian traditions (e.g. Sargon of Akkad and Cyrus the Great).[10] In the *Dārābnāma* it is also used for the birth of Dārāb who, like Moses, is set adrift in a box on the Euphrates.[11] According to Donald B. Redford, stories employ this motif for reasons that fall into different categories.[12] The legends of Dārāb's and Alexander's births in the *Dārābnāma* fall into the same category: the child is exposed through shame at the circumstances of its birth. Given the mythological context of this motif, one may deduce that since the original evolution of the Dārāb story would have taken place in the context of a living oral tradition, it was transferred to Alexander in the same manner.

On the other hand, a similar story was told about the births of Kay Khosrow (in the *Shāhnāma*)[13] and Cyrus (Herodotus 1.107–8).[14] In this context we may emphasise the parallels between the births of Alexander and Kay Khosrow/Cyrus as a representation of the process of Persianisation. The purpose of the Kay Khosrow and Cyrus stories was to justify the emergence of a new dynasty on the throne of Persia. The same reason could be applied to Alexander since he started a new era in the Persian history. In addition, and more striking, transferring the legend of Cyrus' birth to Alexander recalls the latter's attempt to connect himself with the Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia*.[15] In this work Xenophon provides the most elaborate picture of Cyrus as the

[9] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 81–2, XV.25–30.

[10] According to Robert Drews, in Mesopotamian folk tradition the entire story of Sargon was transferred to Cyrus by the late fifth century. See Drews 1974, 390.

[11] The story of Dārāb's birth is not specifically Persian, but probably Indo-Iranian or even Indo-European in origin (in which case perhaps the Jews could have picked it up in Babylon and applied it to Moses). The subject is highly controversial. The hypothesis of an Iranian influence on Judaeo-Christian tradition has been discussed mainly by Boyce 1954, 298ff. See also Duchesne-Guillemin 1982; Gignoux 1985–8.

[12] Redford 1967, 211. [13] Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāma*, II.364–72.

[14] Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh compares the story of Kay Khosrow's birth with that of Cyrus in Herodotus and Xenophon. He concludes that the legend of Kay Khosrow's birth in the *Shāhnāma* and the Greek versions of the legend of Cyrus' birth are based on a common source. See Khaleghi-Motlagh 1374/1995.

[15] On the idea that Alexander was imitating the Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia* see Stark 1988, 203–10; Tatum 1989, 11–12, 238–9.

idealised king. In the Persian tradition Kay Khosrow also represents an ideal king whose search for truth prompts him to abandon his rule and with it the mundane affairs of the material world. He places his throne in a castle in Sarir (Albania) and, imbued with a mystical aura, disappears.

It may be that the Persian tradition provides Alexander within a heroic structure which emphasises an idealised kingship. Niẓāmi develops this concept in his *Sharafnāma*, where the most fully realised picture of Alexander as an 'ideal king' appears.[16]

Alexander's Mirror and Kay Khosrow's Goblet

> It was he who invented the mirror by which he led men –
> Which brought that brilliant gem forth from darkness.[17]
>
> به آیینه شد خلق را رهنمون
> ز تاریکی آورد جوهر برون

In this verse Niẓāmi represents Alexander as the inventor of the mirror. Alexander's mirror, in Platonic terms, symbolises the mirror of the unseen world in which reality is reflected, analogous to the cup of Kay Khosrow or the goblet of Jamshid (*jām-i jam*), a topos upon which Niẓāmi elaborates in some detail in the *Sharafnāma*.[18] Kay Khosrow was able to contemplate the whole world in his magic cup. Interestingly, according to Niẓāmi, Kay Khosrow used the cup in order to foretell the fall of the Persian Empire to Alexander. In the account of Dārā's final war, a man named Fariborz counsels Dārā against fighting Alexander, alluding to an old prophecy: Fariborz's grandfather has told him that before Kay Khosrow went off to his death by disappearing into the cave upon Mount Alborz, the king used his magic goblet to look into the future. He uttered a prediction:

> In the heavens I see a star constellated that will soon appear in the heavens of our empire and descend from zenith to nadir. There shall come an arrogant ruffian out of Greece who will set all Iran's fire temples alight. He will conquer the entire land of Iran and then reign on the throne of the Kayānid kings. Although he may seize the entire world, what he gains will not last, and one day he will be cast down.[19]

[16] See Manteghi 2018, chapter 4. [17] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 70. [18] See Stoneman 2016.
[19] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 172.

When Alexander is in the fortress of Sarir, curious to find out about the magic cup and throne of Kay Khosrow, the governor of Sarir compares him to Kay Khosrow:

> The key that made Kay Khosrow capable of seeing the Unseen world, is in your (Alexander's) hands through the mirror. There is no spark of difference – for fame and glory, you achieve them from the mirror, while Kay Khosrow from the cup.[20]
>
> کلیدی که کیخسرو از جام دید
> در آیینه ی دست توست آن کلید
> جز این نیست فرقی که ناموس و نام
> تو ز آیینه بینی و خسرو ز جام

In another passage Alexander places his mirror upon the *pharos* of Alexandria, from which the Alexandrian people can see an approaching enemy fleet a month before it arrives. This is perhaps the best metaphor to show how his possession of a mirror signifies Alexander's possession of *gnosis* and the power of insight into the unseen world just as Kay Khosrow is able not only to see the whole world but also the future in his magic goblet. Niẓāmi explicitly acknowledges the parallel between Alexander and Kay Khosrow: 'Following the tradition of Kay Khosrow . . . Alexander ordered a tower built, on top of which he placed a bright mirror.' This leads us to the next step, where Alexander finds Kay Khosrow's throne and magic goblet. In this passage these two elements (*takht o jām*/throne and magic cup) fuse and through them Alexander and Kay Khosrow become one.[21]

Alexander on Kay Khosrow's Throne

> His order became the manner of Chinese mirror
> His place, the throne of Kay Khosrow.[22]
>
> شد آیینه ی چینیان رای او
> سر تخت کیخسرو جای او

In the *Sharafnāma*, after the construction of the gate against the Qipchak, there is a beautiful passage in which Alexander goes to the fortress of Sarir, where he visits the mythical throne and magic goblet of Kay Khosrow. Niẓāmi affirmed that storytellers during soirées (*shab-afsāna*) narrated

[20] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 327–8. [21] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 327. [22] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 71.

stories about Albania to Alexander, informing him of the existence of a fortress in which Kay Khosrow's throne (*sarir* means 'throne' in Arabic) and goblet were to be found.[23] This is an important motif since it officially recognises Alexander as the ruler of Persia by presenting him sitting on Kay Khosrow's throne. Indeed, at the beginning of the *Sharafnāma*, Niẓāmi mentions this important element in the following verse:

> His judgements were as bright and clear as a Chinese mirror;
> He set up his kingdom in the canton of Kay Khosrow's throne.[24]

In sitting on this throne, Niẓāmi affirms that Alexander 'gave back life to the dead Kay Khosrow'.[25]

> شه آن تخت را چون به خود ساز داد
> به کیخسرو مرده جان باز داد

Alexander thus not only represents a renewal of Kay Khosrow's customs, but also becomes the Kay Khosrow of his time. The throne and the magic cup are two important elements in making Alexander another Kay Khosrow. Niẓāmi explains the meaning of the mirror/cup:

> In the mirror and the cup (the way and fashion) of both of those kings
> Thus it is better that in both (the mirror and the cup) you should learn a path (how to rule).[26]

> در آیینه و جام آن هر دو شاه
> چنان به که به بینی از هر دو راه

By sitting on the throne and drinking from the cup, Alexander 'renewed the custom of Kay Khosrow'. By sitting on this throne, Alexander becomes not only a legitimate king within the Kayānid dynasty, but also an idealised one since his kingdom is based on the principles attributed to Kay Khosrow. This may reflect a shadow of a memory of Alexander imitating the Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia.* On this point, while in the Greek tradition it is Cyrus the Great who becomes one of the most developed models of how to rule, in the Persian tradition it is Alexander who becomes the ideal king, especially in the work of Niẓāmi and those who followed him.[27]

Through these three elements – the circumstances of birth and exposure, possessing a magical element which enables perception of the unseen

[23] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 324. [24] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 71. [25] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 331.
[26] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 334.
[27] On Cyrus as a model for kingship in the Greek tradition see Mitchell 2013b, 10–16.

and, finally, sitting on the throne of an ancestor/idealised king – the Persian tradition establishes a deliberate assimilation of Alexander's personality with the character of Kay Khosrow/Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia*.[28] Linking these elements is their use of similar ethical messages designed to produce an image of the perfect man and monarch. They act as vehicles to broach and expatiate upon the topos of the king as a true vicegerent of God on earth, combining all the attributes of the perfect man. Both Kay Khosrow and Alexander thus serve as a symbol of ideal kingship and offer an exemplar to follow. Both kings' life represents the royal legitimacy.

In Niẓāmi's work the parallel between Alexander and Kay Khosrow is also reflected in their adventures in several passages. For instance, Kay Khosrow confronts strange creatures and encounters supernatural phenomena similar to those met by Alexander as he approaches the limits of the known world. In the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdowsi Kay Khosrow pursues Afrāsīyāb from Ray and Khorāsān and reaches the Caucasus, passing over the Caspian Sea. In the *Sharafnāma* Alexander follows his footsteps but in the opposite direction, starting his journey from the Caucasus and then reaching Khorāsān and Ray, where he destroys many fire temples and founds the city of Herat before passing through Balkh, Ghazna and Ghur on the way to India.[29] This brings me to the next characteristic of Alexander mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Alexander's adventures in India and his maritime voyages were transferred to the Sistāni epic cycle, especially the exploits of Garshāsp and Farāmarz.

Heroes Facing the Marvels of the World

The royal Alexander is also linked to other heroes by similar adventures, specifically the exploits of Garshāsp, the ancestor of the Sistāni epic cycle, and Farāmarz, son of Rostam, who appears during Kay Khosrow's reign. The main sources studied here are the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdowsi (completed in 1010), the *Iskandarnāma* (comprising the *Sharafnāma* and the *Iqbālnāma*) of Niẓāmi (thirteenth century), the *Garshāspnāma* of Asadi Ṭusi (completed in 1066) and the anonymous *Farāmarznāma-ye Bozorg* (eleventh century).

'The creative reception of the *Alexander Romance* in the Persian tradition, and the fact that most of Alexander's exploits were transferred to the other

[28] Stark 1988, 203–10; Tatum 1989, 11–12, 238–9; Mitchell 2013a, 101.
[29] Niẓāmi 1378/1999, 342–50.

heroes has been addressed by Ulrich Marzolph in the case of the *Ḥamzanāma*[30] and by Marjolijn van Zutphen in the case of the *Farāmarznāma*.[31] By studying the exploits of other heroes within the framework of the Persian epic cycle, we realise that the influence of the *Alexander Romance* on this genre goes further than the versions dedicated to Alexander's adventures, many of whose motifs can also be found among the exploits of other heroes.

The elements which were transferred to other heroes mostly belong to the *mirabilia* or marvel genre. The marvels are found in two parts of the Greek *Alexander Romance*. The first part is the *Epistola Alexandri Magni ad Aristotelem de mirabilibus Indiae* (*Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about the Wonders of India*), which describes many monstrous beasts and strange races of men. The Greek original of this text is lost, although it is preserved in abridged forms in all the Greek versions of the *Alexander Romance*. Secondly, the marvels are recounted in the letter to Olympias (II, 23–40), which contains other marvellous adventures that take place in Jerusalem and Egypt, while repeating the adventures of Book II, 8.

The Persian versions of the *Alexander Romance* also contain the strange adventures in India. In addition, interestingly, other Persian romances dating from the eleventh century adapt major elements of Alexander's adventures in India. The *Farāmarznāma-ye Bozorg* includes a section called 'Farāmarz goes to Indian islands and sees marvels' based on the *Alexander Romance*. There Farāmarz faces – as did Alexander – strange creatures (notably creatures with soft feet and huge ears), slays a dragon and encounters the Brahmans. On the other hand, most of the elements in Garshāsp's maritime adventures in the Indian islands are also borrowed from the *Alexander Romance*. The *Garshāspnāma* of Asadi Ṭusi also contains the encounter with the Brahmans, the dragon-slaying and the maritime voyages bringing the hero face to face with strange creatures. In general, the elements borrowed directly from the *Alexander Romance* are the maritime adventures and the marvels of India.

In the *Iqbālnāma* Niẓāmi relates how Alexander is eager to set sail to behold the wonders of the seas. En route to China, Alexander's sailors realise that they are lost. Suddenly a mountain appears before them, rising up out of the sea, on the far side of which is a whirlpool. When the captain of the conqueror's navy sees this deadly whirlpool, he casts anchor and

30 Marzolph 2012.

31 See Van Zutphen (2014). She is currently working on the influence of the *Alexander Romance* on other Persian epics within Doufikar-Aerts' research programme at the Free University of Amsterdam.

orders his sailors to disembark on the mountainous island. The captain informs Alexander that it is not possible to sail beyond the island because of the whirlpool, which was called the 'Lion's Den' (*kām-i shir*) because it had caused the death of many sailors.[32] Alexander is also told that the only option is to reach a land called 'Qaiṣur' (or Qiṣur), which was quite far from China.[33] At this juncture Balinās (Apollonius of Tyana) constructs a talismanic statue on the island. He makes another copper statue around whose neck he hangs a huge drum and places the statue atop a pillar. Henceforth, whenever a ship was trapped in the whirlpool, the sound of the drum pulled the boat out and so saved the sailors. Thanks to Balinās' talisman, they pass on and reach the land where the Chinese emperor is waiting for them.

Niẓāmi also provides another version of this story. According to the ancient maps, the 'Lion's Den' was located near Babylonia.[34] Niẓāmi writes that he asked an expert sculptor (*hay'at-shinās*) to explain the secret of the talisman and drum, and received the following explanation:

> Whenever any ship approaches that mountain, a huge fish appears and moves in circles around the ship, thus creating a whirlpool down into which the ship is drawn. Once it has sunk the ship, the fish devours its crew. But if the fish hears the drum, it is frightened away and retreats into the deeps of the sea. In this way, every ship can escape that whirlpool.[35]

Interestingly, in the episode of the *Shāhnāma* in which Kay Khosrow crosses the Zarah Sea (in Sistān), Ferdowsi speaks of a similar place called *fam al-asad* (the Lion's Den or Lion's Mouth), corresponding to Niẓāmi's *kām-i shir* (lit. 'Lion's Gullet' in Persian).[36] But Ferdowsi uses the Arabic equivalent of this term and puts the Lion's Den in a totally different place and tale. In the *Qiṣṣa-yi Amir Ḥamza* (*The Adventures of Amir Ḥamza*), a popular Persian tale[37] originating in the eleventh century and known also

32 Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 210. 33 Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 210:

به قیصور می گردد این راه باز
وز آنجا به چین هست راهی دراز

34 Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 212:

دگرگونه در دفتر آرد دبیر
ز رهنامه رهشناسان پیر
که آن کام شیر از حد بابل است
سخن چون دوقولی بود مشکل است

35 Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 213. 36 Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāma*, vol. IV, p. 297.

37 Shiʿār 1347/1968. The whirlpool episode is absent from the Persian original and only appears in the Urdu version; see Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007.

in Urdu,[38] the Lion's Den whirlpool becomes the 'Whirlpool of Alexander' and the drum constructed by Balinās becomes the '*timbal* of Alexander'.

The huge fish appears dead in the *Garshāspnāma*, on one of the Indian islands. King Mihrāj, Garshāsp's companion in these maritime adventures, informs him that this huge fish is called a *wāl* (whale).[39] During his voyage in the Indian islands, Garshāsp reaches an island called Bartāyel (برطایل), where he hears music, dancing and feasting but sees no one. When Garshāsp asks his sailor about the secret of that island, he replies that nobody knows. It seems sirens are playing music and dancing:[40]

تو گفتی همه بیشه بزم پریست
درختش ز هر سو به رامشگری ست

As if the whole shore was the stage of mermaids singing
Even the trees were dancing in all directions

This island recalls Alexander's encounter with the mermaids in the Greek Romance, the *Letter to Aristotle* (22). This letter relates that women whose long hair covers their whole body emerged from a river and dragged men from Alexander's army into the water. Niẓāmi is the only author who includes the motif of mermaids. His account seems to be based on the recensions of this text (ε 33.3 and γ II.41 only) in which sirens emerge from a lake and dance around it during the night.[41] In the *Iqbālnāma* Alexander asks the Chinese emperor to accompany him on his sea voyage. They sail for forty days until they reach the Black Sea (*āb-i kabud*). They are informed that there is a land where mermaids (*'arusān-i ābi*) gather on the shore every evening, and sing and play music all night.[42] However, at 'the scent of the dawn', they plunge back into the sea. Everyone who hears the mermaids' songs falls unconscious. In order to verify the truth of this tale, Alexander goes to the shore alone at night and sees the mermaids coming out of the sea. Their long, dishevelled hair, which they let down freely, covers their bodies entirely.[43] When he hears their song, Alexander starts to cry and laugh simultaneously. Having confirmed the veracity of the story and experienced for himself the strange thrills evoked by the mermaids' nocturnal concert, he returns to his army.

In addition to mermaids, both Garshāsp and Farāmarz encounter strange marine creatures, exactly like Alexander had. Notable among

[38] Lakhnavi and Bilgrami 2007, 220–4. [39] Ṭusi 1354/1975, 166. [40] Ṭusi 1354/1975, 148.
[41] See Stoneman 2008, 145–6. [42] Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 205. [43] Niẓāmi 1376/1997, 205:

پراگنده گیسو بر اندام خویش
زده مشک بر نقره خام خویش

these are creatures with soft feet and others with huge ears. Alexander's adventures with the soft-footed creatures appear in the Syriac *Alexander Romance* as part of his letter to Aristotle about the marvels of India. In the Persian tradition these creatures are known as *sust-pāyān* (limp-footed creatures), *narm-pāyān* (soft feet) or *davāl-pāyān* (hidden feet). The *Shāhnāma* seems to be the earliest source in which there are references to such creatures. However, they feature not only in the Alexander section, but also in the adventures of another Kayānid king, Kay Kāvus, who must face them in Māzandarān. There, they are called *sust-pāyān*. The anonymous *Farāmarznāma-ye Bozorg* follows the account of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma*, calling these creatures *narm-pāyān*.

In the *Garshāspnāma* Asadi Ṭusi describes creatures called *sag-sarān* ('dog-headed'), which have two enormous ears as big as those of an elephant. Asadi Ṭusi thus also calls them *pil-gushān* ('elephant-eared').[44] In the *Shāhnāma*, on his return to Babylon, Alexander finds a creature called *Gush-bastar* (lit. 'ear-bed'),[45] which has such huge ears that it uses one as a mattress and the other as a blanket. Curiously, in many sources Gog and Magog are described with enormous ears and are also referred to as *pil-gush* ('elephant ears') or *gilim-gush* ('carpet ears').[46] Ferdowsi describes Gog and Magog: 'Their breast and ears are like those of an elephant. If they go to sleep, one of the ears serves as a bed, while the other is folded over their bodies.'[47] The *pil-gushān* also appears in the *Farāmarznāma-ye Bozorg* but has nothing to do with Gog and Magog. These creatures became an element of the hero's journey, against which he must fight in order to fulfil his heroic tasks.

Another element transferred from Alexander to other heroes was dragon-slaying. The story of Alexander slaying a dragon in the *Shāhnāma* is based on an episode in the Syriac version of the *Alexander Romance*. In the Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes, the story takes place in a region close to Prasiake in India.[48] Fighting a dragon is an archetypal labour of many kings and heroes in the *Shāhnāma*, including Alexander's ancestors Isfandiyār and Bahman Ardashir.[49] However, what makes Alexander's deed unique is the method he uses to slay the dragon. In the *Shāhnāma* he kills the dragon by feeding it five oxen stuffed with poison

[44] See Ṭusi 1354/1975, 174–5.

[45] Ṭusi 1345/1966, 169, and Qazwini 1340/1961, 458 speak of creatures with enormous ears which they use as a bed.

[46] See Seyed-Gohrab, Wilhelmina and Doufikar-Aerts 2007, 58; Van Donzel and Schmidt 2002, 231.

[47] Ferdowsi, vol. VI, pp. 97–8. [48] Budge 2003, 107–8. [49] Ferdowsi, vol. V, pp. 42–7, 232–6.

and naphtha. According to the Syriac *Alexander Romance*, Alexander slays the dragon with quicklime, bitumen, lead and sulphur. This account resembles the story of Daniel slaying a dragon with balls of bitumen, dough and hair, and the killing of the snake king Sapor (Shapur?) using camel hides stuffed with straw and charcoal.[50]

This method was transmitted to other heroes and was also used by Rostam and his son Farāmarz curiously also in India. According to Ferdowsi, Rostam fills oxhides with quicklime and stones and carries them to the place where a dragon, called Babr-i Bayān, comes out of the sea once a week. The dragon swallows them and its stomach bursts. Rostam then has the dragon flayed and makes a coat from its skin, also called *babr-i bayān*. A similar method is also used by Farāmarz to slay a dragon called Mār-i jawshā ('the hissing snake'), which lives on a mountain in India. Farāmarz slays the dragon with the help of another hero, Bizhan. They hide in two boxes and allow themselves to be swallowed by the dragon.[51] In general, as Daniel Ogden points out, 'the motif of the killing of the dragon by feeding it burning or combustible material may well be best considered a folktale motif'.[52]

Another element adopted in Asadi Ṭusi's *Garshāspnāma* and the anonymous *Farāmarznāma* is the encounter and the dialogue with the Brahmans. The narrative of Alexander's encounter with the Brahmans is found in a papyrus preserved in Berlin (Pap. Berol. 13044 ¼ F. Gr. Hist., 1539), as well as in all extant works of historians of Alexander.[53] In the Greek *Alexander Romance* (III, 5–6), the episode is found between the battle with Porus and the talking tree episode, and it is expanded in the fifth-century work of Palladius, *De gentibus Indiae et de Bragmanibus*.[54] Garshāsp and Farāmarz encounter a Brahman during their journey in India and ask him philosophical questions regarding the essence of the universe, mankind and life's transience.

Conclusion

Alexander is remembered in the Persian tradition as a favoured king. He was also an important figure to imitate in heroic cycles. His representation

50 Ogden 2012, 281–2.

51 *Farāmarznāma*, pp. 230–2. The *Farāmarznāma-ye Bozorg* includes three dragon-slaying episodes. Farāmarz slays two dragons in India (pp. 210 and 230) and another as the seventh of his seven heroic tasks or *haft khan* (p. 339).

52 Ogden 2012, 290.

53 See Stoneman 1994, 1995.

54 See Stoneman 1994, 500–10.

in Persian texts owes much to stories from the *Alexander Romance* tradition. As a conqueror who became a 'legitimate Persian king', he embodies values the Iranians had already brought into their own ideologies of kingship. He provided an accepted model of kingship, and he was a world conqueror whose image would appeal particularly to rulers with similar pretensions to conquest. This aspect is particularly reflected in the poetry of Farrukhi Sistāni and ʿOnṣori, which constantly compares Sultan Maḥmud of Gazna with Alexander; it also offered a model during the Mongol period legitimising the transfer of political power and the use of the past in the construction of a ruler's image. Alexander's portrayal in the Persian context served to legitimise the new conquering dynasty and to assist the acculturation of the Mongols to Iranian traditions.[55]

Ironically, the Greeks' formative encounter with kingship was with the Iranian kingship of the Achaemenids, in particular Cyrus the Great, who became the exemplar of the ideal ruler. In the Persian tradition, Alexander took on this role and became not only an idealised representation of royal legitimacy, but also, in Niẓāmi's hands, of man's kingship as the vicegerent of God in the cosmos. In order to play this role, Alexander was associated to Kay Khosrow, who also represents an ideal king in the Persian tradition. Through association with Kay Khosrow the Persian tradition placed Alexander on an equal footing to Kay Khosrow/Cyrus. In this way the Persian tradition created a style of kingship which suited the needs of the authors and poets of the medieval period who developed ideas about how to rule. Through imaginative reconstruction of a historical figure the Persian tradition made Alexander an exemplum whose career set out the principles of kingship. As a result, common motifs emerge surrounding these two kings, such as that of the exposed child, indicating that the nature of a king is what matters. If a king is abandoned as a child and the throne is denied him, it is only temporarily so for his right to rule is inherent. As Lynette Mitchell affirms, although speaking of a Greek context, 'Birth and the *basilikos* nature belong together, but the *basilikos* nature is an indication of birth, even if that is temporarily hidden.'[56]

On the other hand, in the Persian tradition the legitimacy of rule was also associated with heroic values. If one proved one was fit to rule, it was only a small step further to prove one was also a heroic ruler. The analysis of the other Persian romances shows the extent to which the 'Alexander model' derived from the epic narrative was influential. Alexander provided a number of archetypes that became routine formulaic topoi in later romances, which belong to a common corpus of tradition (the Kayānid epic cycle). These

[55] See Hillenbrand 1996, 203–29; Melville 2013, 349–51. [56] Mitchell 2013c, 60.

elements, besides being recounted as part of the entertainment, serve as a didactic device. The hero-king can only acquire knowledge, both of himself and of the supernatural divine realm, through strange encounters and marvellous experiences that transcend rational understanding in order to interpret the laws of the cosmos and uncover higher laws sustaining both the natural and supernatural realms. As stated in the *Cosmography* of Aḥmad Ṭusi (possibly written between 1160 and 1177), man should exert himself to study and contemplate God's wondrous and wisely conceived creation, in order to reflect upon it in wonder and astonishment and to understand as much as is possible.[57] In this way man will gain the delights of both this world and the hereafter.[58]

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[57] Aḥmad Ṭusi 1391/2012, Introduction, p. xvi. [58] Aḥmad Ṭusi 1391/2012, 2–3.

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13 The Persian Alexander (2)

Amir Khusraw and the Philosophical View of Alexander

RICHARD STONEMAN

Alexander's Philosophers

Alexander is persistently associated with philosophers, and Plato in particular, in the Persian tradition. Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), the Macedonian conqueror, lived with philosophers from his earliest years. As is well known, his education was put in the hands of Aristotle, whose influence was lasting. A famous anecdote has him encounter the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, living in his *pithos* in Corinth; when asked to choose a gift, Diogenes asked the king to get out of his sunshine. On his expedition to the East Alexander was accompanied by Aristotle's nephew, Callisthenes, who seems to have been a historian of some kind as well as a philosopher; by Anaxarchus, who once depressed the king by expounding his doctrine of 'infinite worlds', at which Alexander reflected that he had not yet conquered even one of them; and by Pyrrho, who seems to have been influenced by Buddhist philosophy and logic in the development of his own system.[1] Best known of all is the impact of his encounter with the Indian 'naked philosophers', whether or not he met them face to face or simply sent Onesicritus (himself a man with philosophical interests) to interview them.[2]

When Alexander became a hero of Persian literature through his assumption of the kingship after his defeat of Darius III in 330 BC, the writers of his story liked to present him surrounded by diverse Greek philosophers.[3] In this they seem to be presenting him as a typical Persian king. From the reign of Darius I onwards, Greek intellectuals, notably physicians, were in demand in Persia.[4] Democedes treated Darius for a sprained ankle and his wife for an abscess, and won favour and fortune thereby. Artaxerxes I (465–424 BC) pressed Hippocrates to work for him, but Hippocrates ungraciously declined

Dedicated to the memory of Leonard Lewisohn, my Persian teacher, who helped me greatly in preparing an earlier version of this chapter.

1 D. L. 9.61; Frenkian 1957; Flintoff 1980; Beckwith 2015.
2 Stoneman 1995. See also Plut. Alex. 17 for his honours to Theodectes of Phaselis.
3 Casari 2010. Some Hellenistic kings too set out to attract intellectuals to their courts, most notably the Ptolemies.
4 Stoneman 2015, 63–6.

the invitation. The doctor Ctesias of Cnidus spent seventeen years at the Persian court after the battle of Cunaxa, working for Artaxerxes II, and turned himself into a kind of historian during that time. I have suggested that Greek and Persian storytelling began to interact as a result of Alexander's mingling of the two cultures.[5] In the (probably invented) collection of letters between Alexander III and Darius III preserved in *PSI* 1285 Alexander expects Darius to understand who Zethus and Amphion are, and assures him that Darius' philosophers 'can translate the stories for you'; he refers to one Polyidus, presumably the dithyrambic poet, who is currently living at the Persian court.[6] Perhaps because of this exchange of letters, Alexander was later conceived of as the originator of Sassanian diplomatic practices.[7] The interchange of stories is very evident in the transference of 'Metiochus and Parthenope' to the Persian *Vamiq o Adhraa*.[8] Persian fascination with ancient Greece continues in later literature, not least in Jami's (d. 1499) *Salaman wa Absal*, in which the king of Greece stands for the ideal ruler, and is accompanied by a live-in philosopher:

> A Shah there was who ruled the Realm of Yun,
> And wore the Ring of [the] Empire of Sikander;
> And in his Reign a Sage, who had the Tower
> Of Wisdom of so strong Foundation built
> That Wise Men from all Quarters of the World
> To catch the Word of Wisdom from his Lip
> Went in a Girdle round him.[9]

Abstract thinkers appealed to the Sasanians: Khusraw I Anushirvan (AD 531–79) offered a place of refuge to Damascius and the other philosophers of the Neoplatonist school of Athens when it was closed down by Justinian; but the philosophers did not like it in Persia and soon returned home.[10] Another Greek thinker at the Persian court of Khusraw I was Paul the Persian, as he was known; his writings included an introduction to Aristotle, known from its Syriac version though Paul probably wrote in Greek.[11] In Nizam ul-Mulk's *Siyasatnameh* the adviser to Khosrow Anushirvan, the sage Buzurjmehr, is described as a 'Yunan', a Greek. A Persian romance about

5 Stoneman 2012. 6 Merkelbach 1977, 237–9; Whitmarsh and Thompson 2013, 98.
7 Bagley 1964, lxxii. 8 Hägg and Utas 2003.
9 Fitzgerald n.d., 9. The work is much less well known than his reinvention of Omar Khayyam. See Lingwood 2013, 22: he also provides a more modern translation of the whole poem; this passage is on page 184.
10 Agathias II. 30; Procop. *Anecd*. 18.29: 'Instead of devoting himself to [warfare], scanning the heavens and becoming over-curious about the nature of God.' Peters 1979, 22, and 1996, 44.
11 See for example *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* s.v. Paul the Persian at iranicaonline.org.

Buzurjmehr recalls Alexander's encounter with Sesonchosis.[12] It is therefore no surprise to find that the medieval Persian writers count a group of philosophers as among the typical accoutrements of a Persian ruler. In fact, the presence of a philosopher at court might almost count as a leitmotif of Persian literature: every king should have one (or more).

In Firdawsi's *Shahnameh* (completed 1010), the earliest surviving Alexander text in Persian, the role of Aristotle is prominent. In the eleventh-century Abu Taher Tarsusi's *Darabnameh*, a rollicking tale of adventure, Aristotle features as educator of the king, but the latter is accompanied through most of his adventures by the physician or 'wise man' Hippocrates. The latter assists him in his search for the elusive Plato, who is hiding in a cave and when discovered promptly leaps into the sea to escape – a clear foretaste of his secretive behaviour in Amir Khusraw. Aristotle is to the fore again in Farid ud-Din Attar's (1120 or later – 1220 or earlier AD) *Conference of the Birds*. In a passage about how one should face up to death, a story is told about how Alexander, on the point of death, received advice from Aristotle that he should reject all Greek philosophy in favour of Islamic enlightenment:

> How will you know the truths religion speaks
> While you're philosophizing with the Greeks? . . .
> Medina's wisdom is enough, my friend,
> Throw dirt on Greece, and all that Greece might send.[13]

The association of Alexander with philosophers is developed to a new level in the *Iskandarnameh* of Nizami Ganjavi (1140–1208). In the second part of this long work, the *Iqbalnameh* (*Book of Blessings*), the story is told of a group of seventy philosophers who refuse to accept the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus as truth. Hermes paralyses the sceptics, and Iskandar comes on the scene to approve his action. In the next episode (the chronology is somewhat indeterminate) a babble of philosophers is quelled by Aristotle announcing that he is the one universal knower who gets everything right. Plato, who is also present, is annoyed by his arrogance and retreats from human company into his Barrel, where he listens to the music of the seven spheres and then composes music that gives him the power to put animals to sleep.[14] The story is interrupted by Alexander's

12 Bagley 1964, lxvii.

13 Tr. Dick Davis. See Barry 2004, 385. The passage is omitted from Dick Davis' Penguin translation.

14 The word *khom* means a barrel or bowl, so can also be used as shorthand for *khom-e-falak*, the bowl of heaven: Nizami II. 89. Cf. Bürgel's translation (1991, 433).

interview with the Indian philosopher Keyd, but in the next episode the Greeks reappear. Now there are seven philosophers, and their names are given as 'Aristotle, the king's minister, the old man Socrates and the young man Apollonius (Balinas), Plato (Aflatun), Valis, Porphyry (Furfurius) and Hermes'.[15] Each gives a short discourse on the origins of Creation; Alexander and the poet himself do the same, and Alexander then achieves the rank of a prophet.

The number seven is significant, in view of the 'rule of seven' that characterises so many descriptions of the Persian court from Achaemenid times onwards.[16] Manteghi has drawn attention to the likely influence on Nizami of the Greek tradition of the Seven Sages, as well as the *Tale of the Seven Wise Masters* attributed to the Indian sage Syntipas or Sindbad, known in Greek and Persian versions deriving from a Syriac original.[17] Nizami was a learned man, and he more than once refers to his use of 'Rumi' authors, by which he most probably means Syriac rather than Greek texts.[18] Also relevant here is the tradition of the 'Sayings of the Philosophers' at the deathbed of Alexander: the first such collection appeared in Hunayn ibn Ishāq's *Kitāb ādāb al-falāsifa*, and was later reworked not only in Arabic, but also in Hebrew, Syriac and Spanish. It entered Western literature through the Latin of Petrus Alphonsus' *Disciplina Clericalis* (twelfth century) and then became widely diffused and entered the third recension of the Latin version of the *Alexander Romance*, *Historia de Proeliis*, in the fourteenth century.[19] Many of the philosophers here are unnamed, and others are obscure; their remarks are furthermore platitudinous, but still they are philosophers surrounding Alexander. One of the things the Persian Alexander does is to talk to philosophers, and a conversation with Plato is particularly prominent in Amir Khusraw's poem *The Mirror of Alexander (A'ine-ye Iskandari)*.

[15] This motley collection presents some problems of interpretation. Balinas is generally taken to be Apollonius of Tyana, but may be Apollonius of Perge. Piemontese interprets him when he appears in Amir Khusraw as the engineer Eupalinus, but this seems far-fetched. Haila Manteghi (2018) has suggested that Apollonius of Tyana is introduced because of his known connection with another Alexander, the false prophet Alexander of Abonuteichos. Valis is even more problematic. Bürgel interprets the name as Thales, while Chelkowski thinks it should be the second-century astrologer Vettius Valens: Bürgel 1991, 459; Chelkowski 1977, 47–8.

[16] Stoneman 2015, 61 and n.

[17] The Persian version may be as late as 1157 (Manteghi 2016, 100). The Latin was made before 1342. In the fifteenth century it was translated into German and many other European languages. For a recent discussion of this text and its translation history see Roth 2004 and 2008. See English translations by Clouston 1884 and Gollancz 1897.

[18] Bürgel 1991, 378; Manteghi 2018, 79–80.

[19] Brock 1970, 205–6. From the *HP* it entered, for example, the Spanish *Libro de Alexandre* 2648ff.

Amir Khusraw

Amir Khusraw of Delhi (1251–1325) is widely reputed to be the greatest of the Persian poets of India, 'the parrot of India' as he is often called. I. H. Siddiqui calls him 'the most gifted and entertaining of medieval writers, who wrote on contemporary history in prose and verse, in addition to Persian poetry in general'.[20] His poem, *The Mirror of Alexander*, was completed in the year 1299, some twenty years before his Western contemporary, Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), produced his *Divine Comedy*. Hafez of Shiraz, perhaps the greatest of all poets in the Persian language, was born in the year Amir Khusraw died. *The Mirror of Alexander* is one of many accounts of the career of Alexander the Great (Iskandar) in Persian literature, and approximately one-sixth of it is devoted to the hero's meeting with the hermit sage Plato, who plies him with advice on kingship. This chapter sets out to explain the choice of these two historical figures as vehicles for political wisdom in the Delhi Sultanate, and to characterise the main features of Plato's discourse while setting it in a context of Arabic and Persian *Mirrors for Princes*.

Amir Khusraw

Amir Khusraw was a Sufi and courtier who served five successive rulers under the Delhi Sultanate, which began with the conquest of India by Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 997–1030).[21] Two centuries later, in the early thirteenth century, many Persians fled from Iran and Central Asia to Delhi in the face of the Mongol invasions; the last caliph of Baghdad was executed in 1258, and Delhi became a hub and refuge for Muslims. The state the Delhi Sultans established caused considerable heart-searching among Muslims, and later historians have been unsure whether to characterise it as a secular state or a theocracy. Kingship is problematic in Muslim thought, so the sultans needed to lay claim to the religious authority that had belonged to the caliphs in order to justify their rule.[22]

20 Siddiqui 2006, 294.

21 For the following summary of Amir Khusraw's life I draw mainly on Sharma 2005. For a more expansive version see Stoneman 2018.

22 Scholars wrote a number of works on the duties of the sultan in this period, including the *Muqaddima* of Fakhr-I Mudabbir for Qutbuddin Aybek (1206–10) and the *Chachnama* for Iltutmish (1211–36). These duties include justice, maintenance of peace and order, maintenance of bridges, roads and forts and creating the conditions for prosperity. See Siddiqui 2006, 44–5. Also see Siddiqui 2003, 81, on the distinction between the roles of the sultan and of the *'ulama*.

Amir Khusraw followed his father in service to the Delhi Sultans, and his final patron was Ala al-Din Khalji, who ruled for twenty years (1296–1316) and styled himself 'the second Alexander' on his coinage.[23] Ala al-Din was the first sultan in Delhi to toy with the idea of styling himself caliph, and his son Qutb al-Din actually did so.[24] Thus Amir Khusraw, who drafted many political and administrative documents as well as wrote poetry, could celebrate India as a place where the cawing crows of Hinduism were subdued and even the fish were Sunnis.[25] Siddiqui characterises Ala al-Din's reign as 'a classic example of a centralized polity that went a long way to inspire rulers throughout the medieval period'.[26] He reorganised the provincial administration, maintained an efficient network of spies, and built the first canals as well as a number of tanks or reservoirs, turning Delhi into the largest city in the Islamic world.[27] John Keay describes him as 'an illiterate of unremarkable physique and unendearing presence';[28] nonetheless, he surrounded himself with writers who, it was hoped, would celebrate his many victories and his acquisition of wealth from conquered rivals. He nursed a vision of Islamic domination of the whole of India and religious reform. Some contemporary writers regarded Ala al-Din as a bad king who went beyond the requirements of justice and *shariah* in his infliction of extravagant punishments.[29] Amir Khusraw speaks of these with apparent approval:

> Over the heads of all of them, men as well as women, the saw of punishment was drawn . . . the saw with its heart of iron loudly laughed over their heads with tears of blood. Those, who by a secret stroke had become one, were now openly sawed into two, and the soul that had sought union with another soul was now compelled to leave its own body.[30]

In addition to his court patrons, Amir Khusraw enjoyed a lifelong association with his *pir* or spiritual adviser, Nizam al-Din Awliya. This charismatic spiritual leader was a leading presence in the Chishti order of Sufis, contemplative mystics who practised poverty and austerity.[31] Amir Khusraw celebrated his teacher in heartfelt words:

> You have the elixir of love in your goblet,
> Your message is the timely word from a beloved.

[23] Seyller 2001, 9. He maintained a total of sixty-six scholars at his court: Siddiqui 2003, 87.
[24] Auer 2012, 119–20. [25] Seyller 2001, 10; Siddiqui 2003, 84. [26] Siddiqui 2006, 115.
[27] Siddiqui 2003, 85 and 87; Siddiqui 2006, 272. [28] Keay 2000, 255.
[29] Auer 2012, 142, citing the historian Baranī.
[30] Auer 2012, 144, citing *The Campaigns of 'Ala'u'd-Din Khiljī: Being the . . . Treasures of Victory*, translated by M. Habib (Madras 1931, 12).
[31] Sharma 2005, 12–13.

The course of union of both worlds
Is in the space of your two steps.[32]

Nizam may have been in his mind when he created the ascetic, mystical figure of Plato who instructs Alexander on the duties of a king

The Mirror of Alexander

Amir Khusraw's *Ā'īne –ye Eskandarī* or 'Mirror of Alexander' is a very different poem from its main predecessors, by Firdawsi (completed in 1010) and Nizami (1197–1203). It is far more a spiritual quest than an account of the reign and conquests of Alexander. These aspects are disposed of in the first half of the poem, which culminates with the conquest of the emperor of China and the monstrous Yajuj and the destruction of the Zoroastrian temples of Iran; there follows Alexander's marriage to the Turkish Amazon warrior Kanifu, fighting in the Chinese army, which unites 'the Moon of China and the Sun of Rum'. Alexander also invents various useful devices, including the astrolabe and the mirror. The whole of Greece is then submerged beneath a flood (the idea may be inspired by Plato's myth of Atlantis), and of the seven philosophers associated with Alexander only Plato, Heraclitus and Porphyry survive by swimming to safety. In the remainder of the poem, to quote Angelo Michele Piemontese, 'this universal king is portrayed as a wise strategist, equanimous [*sic*] ruler, industrious scientist, explorer and conqueror of the world, intrepid navigator of the unknown ocean, all by the grace of God and the favour of Fortune'.[33]

The story of the emperor of China goes back to the Syriac version of the *Alexander Romance* but acquired a new edge as a result of the Mongol incursions into Central Asia and India. The alleged destruction of the Zoroastrian books made Alexander 'accursed' for one strand of opinion in Iran, but for good Muslims like Nizami or Amir Khusraw it was de rigueur.[34] Alexander is now effectively ruler of the world, and his aim is to seek the best possible advice on how to be the best possible ruler. To this end he seeks out the philosopher Plato. However, the philosopher rebuffs his invitation: 'the ant who wanted to visit Solomon was crushed under the heels of a mule', he pronounces, and insists that it would be better if Alexander came to him. Alexander duly goes to visit Plato in his 'dragon's

[32] Sharma 2005, 31. [33] Piemontese 2007, 31.
[34] Stoneman 2008, 42–3, with further bibliography.

cave', where he finds the philosopher, who seems to him to resemble an angel:

> His curly locks flowed down over his shoulders, and over them was a thick scarf made from a fox's skin. The row of his teeth, gleaming like a precious porcelain jar, concealed within his mouth his tongue, invisible as the Persian key to a treasure. His chest was thin from his many privations. His body was transparent because of his regular fasting. The veins stood out on his white limbs, like filaments in yellow amber. His face as he spoke shone with the light that emanated from his soul.[35]

His wisdom, says the poet, was as vast as the sea.

Plato's Cave clearly has a complex ancestry. First of all it recalls the myth of the Cave in the *Republic*, in which the inhabitants gaze all their lives at shadows while thinking they are observing reality. Secondly it reminds us of Alexander's expedition to kill a dragon that lives in a cave in Nizami, and also of the same author's account of his visit to the 'occulted' Persian emperor Kai Khusraw, which is in turn modelled on Alexander's visit to the 'Cave of the Gods' in the Greek *Alexander Romance*. However, the dragon's cave, as Amir Khusraw calls it, is transformed from a den of evil into the lair of a contemplative: it has much about it of the barrel of Diogenes. As Michael Barry writes, 'Amir Khusrō, as it were, fuses the old archetypes of Dandamis the Brahmin, Diogenes the Greek, and Khizr the Mesopotamian hero in his single figure of Plato as the sage seated within the cave.'[36] In Nizami's account of the cave of Kay Khusraw, the *nur-i-siyah* or black light of the cave gives place to a luminous well in the depths of the cave, which represents the essence of the godhead.[37] This 'luminous darkness', which in an anonymous medieval Western writer was once called 'The Cloud of Unknowing', is the unmanifest essence of divinity, and is expressed in the Sufi concept of the 'black light'.[38] It is this that Alexander enters as he arrives at Plato's threshold.[39]

Plato's discourse to Alexander, 'the sage who recognizes the wise man', occupies the longest section of the poem (about 14 per cent of the whole). Alexander invites Plato to join his court as his minister, where he will be a colleague of Aristotle, but Alexander is sure Plato is the greater philosopher. Plato speaks in large part in parables: his response to this invitation is to ask how the ruler of the world can possibly be interested in a single

[35] Translated from the Italian of Piemontese 1999, 127. [36] Barry 2004, 320.
[37] The author calls it a 'sulphur mine': Manteghi 2018, 145 suggests that this 'burning pit' is actually a volcano.
[38] On this concept see Corbin 1978, 4–5 and 99–120. [39] Barry 2004, 316–20.

individual. But the king insists that he needs help in bearing the heavy burden of kingship. Plato points out that Alexander is already being led by Fortune and the Invisible One. However, he does now go on to give some advice.

He begins by enjoining the fear of God and humility; the king must remember that world rule is not absolute sovereignty. He must know that he is a withered flower, but remember the perfumes of Paradise. Dervishes, he insists, are superior to kings. Sobriety, attention to conscience and moderation in sleep, faith and clemency are the essential moral qualities. The king should pay attention to military leadership and to the preservation of alliances.[40] He should also look after his horses.

The discourse becomes metaphysical again: the world is an image shown in a mirror, and as such it can never be captured or grasped for good. The conqueror is like the Sun, which leaves the world every day. The world is a handful of dust. It consists of two gardens, of which Alexander has attained just one. Life is a moment: the tomb is your true home; 'a breath of wind in your garden can blow your crown away, while your head falls from your neck'.[41] The world is vanity; regal power is seated on an ever-turning wheel. Solomon was able to fly on his throne, but Bahram Gur dug his tomb while hunting. Plato then speaks of the great hero Kay Khusraw and the great villain, the demon-king Zahhak.

He now returns to practical admonitions. Kingship is to let no one go hungry. One should be a father to one's people and give power to the faithful and those of good family. Practice justice and set a good example. If you cannot attack an elephant, why trample the ant? Be kind to dumb animals. And if you must use violence, at any rate avoid torture and cruelty. Eventually Plato sums up: you must take responsibility for your actions, and a drop of wisdom goes a long way.

Alexander praises Plato for his advice and announces his imminent departure to explore the ocean. His diving bell, which Aristotle helps him build, is in fact the true mirror which reveals the secrets of the universe (Figure 13.1).[42] This expedition occupies the next section of the poem (about fourteen pages) up until the hero's death and exequies.

[40] However, there was notably little diplomatic activity on Ala al-Din's reign in contrast to that of his Tughluq successors: Siddiqui 2006, 190–1. Also, Plato makes no allusion to the spies who were so crucial to Ala al-Din's government.

[41] Piemontese 1999, 138.

[42] Piemontese 2007, 43, suggests that the secrets he observes are those of the drowned country of Atlantis, but this is not stated in the text. In another text, *Dāstān-e Dhū'lqarnayn* (*Story of the Two-Horned*), Plato actually accompanies Alexander in the diving bell.

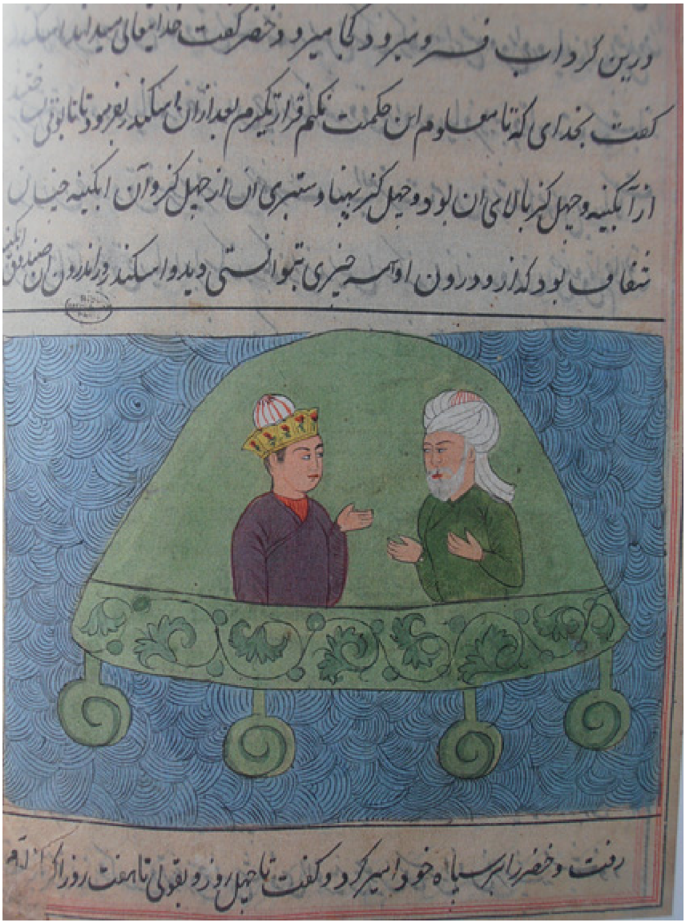


Figure 13.1 Alexander and Plato in the diving bell. Miniature from *Dāstān-e Dhū'l-Qarnayn* (*Story of the Two-Horned*), sixteenth or seventeenth century AD. Paris, Bibliothèque du Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, ms. 472, f. 191r.

Plato and Aristotle in Muslim Thought

The relative positions of Plato and Aristotle in Muslim thought are rather complicated. Plato in the eleventh century was regarded primarily as a magician, and his extensive role in the *Darab-nama* of Tarsusi is largely one of carrying out clever tricks.[43] The true philosopher was Aristotle. Yet the Arabs' Aristotle was a heavily Platonised Aristotle, and their view of his teaching was formed in large part from a work called *The Theology of*

[43] See the abridged translation by Marina Gaillard 2005, which contains many instances. On Plato the magician see Schimmel 1992, 121; Doufikar-Aerts 1970.

Aristotle, which was actually a set of selections from Plotinus.[44] The origin of this philosophical hybrid lay in the Neoplatonic schools of late antiquity, which responded to Christian pressure by making their Plato more Aristotelian. Thus Ammonius, Alexander of Aphrodisias and John Philoponus tried to harmonise the two philosophies, and the move culminated in Porphyry's work *On the Identity of Plato and Aristotle*.[45]

The two great incompatibilities that had to be reconciled were the philosophers' respective doctrines on the eternity of the world (eternal for Aristotle, created for Plato) and on the immortality of the soul (immortal for Plato, dissoluble on death for Aristotle).[46] These differences meant that Aristotle was only acceptable to Muslims in a broader sense after he had been Platonised, despite their unbounded admiration for his scientific and logical works. F. E. Peters writes, 'Why the philosophers under Islam were so transparently NeoPlatonists and were, at the same time, so oblivious to the true nature of their Platonism that they could not identify its author is one of the abiding mysteries of *falsafah*.'[47]

In addition, mystical knowledge, as distinct from rational knowledge, began to gain increasing respect from Islamic philosophers. Ibn Sinā (981–1037) was already prepared to concede its possibility, while al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), in rejecting Peripateticism and reason, took refuge in mysticism. Half a century later emerged a very different philosophical outlook, that of the Illuminationists. This derived essentially from the mystical philosopher Suhrawardī (1154–91), in whose philosophy light is the source and symbol of knowledge and enlightenment.[48] Suhrawardī wrote

> This science [of light] is the very intuition of the inspired and illumined Plato, the guide and master of philosophy, and of those who came before him up to the time of Hermes.[49]

[44] Adamson 2002.

[45] Kotzia 2007, 217. Porphyry also wrote the first Platonic commentary on Aristotle: Peters 1979, 25; Kotzia 2007, 216. See Shayegan 1996, 2–4.

[46] The first is the subject of John Philoponus' *On the Eternity of the World against Proclus* (AD 529); the second is exhibited in the strangely titled *Liber de pomo*, an account of the death of Aristotle modelled on Plato's *Phaedo*: see Kotzia 2007.

[47] Peters 1979, 17. Cf. Peters 1996, 43.

[48] The starting point is Qur'an 24.35, 'God is the light of the heavens and earth.' Corbin 1978 is an eloquent exposition of the philosophy of Suhrawardī. The doctrines of the Brethren of Purity, *Ikhwan al-Safa*, taking shape in the eleventh century, also tended in this direction. See also the pregnant footnote in Lewisohn 2009, note 4: 'there is not even one good study comparing Sufi philosophy to Platonic/Neoplatonic thought'. Most of his scholarly works were written in Arabic, but his more accessible and popular treatises were in Persian: Walbridge 2001, 58–9.

[49] Quoted in Walbridge 2001, 14. See also Walbridge 2000, *passim*, especially chapter 10 on epistemology.

It seems clear, however, that there was very little knowledge of Plato's actual works.[50] The *Letters of the Brethren of Purity* express admiration for Socrates even while confusing him with Diogenes in his barrel, while later writers only made use of excerpts and summaries; even Suhrawardī seems more familiar with the Plato of the *Theology of Aristotle* than with his actual works. It was the idea of Plato the illumined one that counted.[51]

This increasingly dominant Sufi strand in Muslim thought – especially in India – emphasised the disciplines of meditation and the methods of transmission of the divine light from teacher to student, rather as in the relations of Nizam al-Din with Amir Khusraw.[52] When Amir Khusraw sat down to write, then, Plato was known in part as a political theorist but mainly as a Sufi mystic, and this is the model he presents in his poem. This strand, deriving from the popular imagination, is distinct from a more intellectual genre that also informs Amir Khusraw's portrait of Plato.

The 'Mirror for Princes' Genre in Islamic Sources

There are many examples of manuals of statecraft addressed to kings in Persian and Arabic literature, among which the 'Mirror for Princes' is a distinctive form that emphasises matters of morality and metaphysics rather than practical detail. The title of Amir Khusraw's poem, 'The Mirror of Alexander', explicitly aligns his work with that genre, although the mirror in question is also the world-seeing mirror, instantiated in the diving bell, through which Alexander is enabled to contemplate the nature of the universe in the final section of the poem.[53] The classic account by Ann Lambton, 'Islamic Mirrors for Princes', published in 1971, enumerates nine Mirrors in Persian and Arabic from Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Adab al-Kabir* in the eighth century to the *Adab al-Harb wa'l-Shuja'a* of Fakhr-i Mudabbar, written under the Delhi sultanate, plus several more from the Mongol and post-Mongol periods.[54] More recently, Chad Lingwood has interpreted

[50] See Walbridge 2000, 88–90, for details.

[51] Rosenthal 1940. At 398–401 he draws attention to Miskawayh's direct use of Themistius on friendship, as well as his use of Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul.

[52] Siddiqui 2003, 90–1. [53] See further Stoneman 2016.

[54] This list could easily be extended: the earliest relevant text may be the 'epistolary novel of Aristotle and Alexander', on which see later in this chapter. The *Bahr al-Fava'id* or *Sea of Precious Virtues* has been edited by Julie Scott Meisami 1991. One of the most important is al-Ghazali's *Book of Counsel for Kings*, edited by F. R. C. Bagley 1964: see also Khismatulin 2015. The first Persian examples of *Mirrors* are the *Qābūsnāma* of Kai Ka'us ibn Iskandar (AD 1083) and the famous *Siyasatanamah* of Nizam al-Mulk (d. AD 1092), edited by Schabinger 1987. On all these works see Crone 2004. The latter, however, as a manual of statecraft, is more practical

Jami's (1414–92) *Salaman wa Absal* as a book of advice and traced again the long tradition that preceded Jami.[55]

The roots of the 'Mirror for Princes' can be traced back to ancient India, where the *Pancatantra* was a repository of animal fables designed to give wise advice to rulers: the frame story is a meeting of the kings of China, India, Persia and Greece to discuss good government.[56] This was translated into Syriac about AD 550 and thence entered the Islamic mainstream. The genre in Arabic and Persian has generally been treated as predominantly Eastern in origin, since Sasanian and Islamic institutions were in many respects continuous,[57] and Sasanid books of etiquette have been added to the mix by Lambton and Crone.[58] The 'Mirrors' set out to Islamicise older Persian concepts of kingly rule. Bagley (lxxiii) raised the question 'whether any Platonic, Aristotelian or other Greek ideas are to be found among these purported sayings of the philosophers, or among the teachings of *Nasihat al-Muluk* and Mirrors for Princes generally', and concluded that this 'can only be decided by competent classical scholars'. In the succeeding fifty years the state of the question has advanced a little. Several works of statecraft have Aristotle as their actual or supposed source, and can be aligned with the Wisdom tradition involving Alexander and Aristotle.[59]

One of the earliest of these is the epistolary romance about Alexander and Aristotle (*Rasā'īl 'Arisṭāṭālīsa 'ilā-l-Iskandar*). This includes two treatises ascribed to Plato, one on asceticism, as well as a short treatise about Aristotle's *de Anima* which is ascribed to Themistius, and a selection from the funeral orations over Alexander. Mario Grignaschi argues that the whole was a translation of a Greek original, but it has no common ground with the *Alexander Romance* of Pseudo-Callisthenes.[60] More recently, Emily Cottrell has defined it as an 'Umayyad 'Mirror for Princes'.[61]

and less homiletic. The *Book of the Seven Sages* or *Sindbadnama* of Zahiri Samarqandi was written probably some time after 1157. Another example is Balasaguni's Turkic *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, written in Kashgar in 1069: see Starr 2013, 326–30. The *Book of the Seven Sages* or Sindbadnama of Zahiri Samarqandi was written probably some time after 1157: Manteghi 2016, 100.

55 Lingwood 2014. See also Bosworth 1998 on the genre.

56 See also Marlow 2013, who draws attention to Buddhist elements as well as the influence of *Kalila wa Dimna* on Pseudo-Mawardi's *Nasihat al-Muluk*. The teaching of this work is associated with Aristotle, presumably because of his connection to Alexander, who went to India.

57 Lingwood 2014, 35.

58 See Lambton 1971, 420–1; Crone 2004, 150–1.

59 Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 102–33.

60 Published by Maroth 2005. See Grignaschi 1967 and 1970. The understanding of this work has been consolidated by Maroth 2005, Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 103–13, and Cottrell 2016.

61 Cottrell 2016.

Other 'Aristotelian' works existing in Arabic include the *De Mundo*, which, though not a work of statecraft, is known through an Arabic version: chapter 6 is a description of the Persian ruler as a model of God.[62] The widely diffused *Secret of Secrets* pretends to be a work addressed by Aristotle to Alexander on physiognomy as a key to kingship, though it has no genuine Greek original.[63] In addition the Wisdom tradition gives a prominent position to Alexander as a 'philosopher-king'.[64]

One important model from late antiquity is the letter of Themistius to Julian 'On Government'. Themistius is particularly important because his letter was translated from Greek into Arabic by al-Dimashqi in the early tenth century and immediately incorporated by Qudama ibn Ja'far in his *Kitab al-siyasa*. It became well known in medieval Islam.[65] The recovery of these works has made it more likely that there is a Greek as well as an Eastern component to the Perso-Arabic genre, though it remains dubious whether any of the ideas can really be traced back to Aristotle, still less Plato, since the closest analogy, *The Laws*, was unknown to the Muslim Middle Ages.

Plato's ideas as filtered through intermediaries provide a general framework also for the classification of types of government in, for example, al-Ghazali.[66] Al-Farabi read Plato for his politics,[67] while Aristotle's *Politics* was unavailable except in a brief summary.[68] In general Islamic political theory has a strongly ethical cast, which harmonises with an interest in Plato.[69] The turn from Aristotle to Plato comes in the eleventh century, as discussed earlier in this chapter, away from practical advice (more Aristotelian) and towards the idea of the ruler as a Sufi philosopher-king.[70] In many of the 'Mirrors' the homiletic aspect is to the fore. The authors are sages or Sufis, not philosophers: *falsafah* is bad, pagan, while *hikma* is good, Muslim. So Plato the magician and sage becomes a vehicle for teaching preferable to Aristotle the philosopher.[71] In an ideal world, the ruler himself should be a Sufi, but then he would be unable to exercise the tasks of rule: 'Short of becoming a saint himself, it was incumbent on the ruler to be deferential to the *auliya'* in order to earn their

[62] Thom 2014. [63] Ryan and Schmitt 1982. [64] Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 113–28.

[65] Both the 'Letter of Aristotle' and that of Themistius have now been edited and discussed by Swain 2013. On page 8 he cites the bibliographic survey by Daiber. As far as other Greek texts are concerned, Patricia Crone draws attention to Bryson's *Oikonomos* (possibly second century AD), a treatise on household management. In addition, there were several Byzantine 'Mirrors', from AD 530 onwards, briefly mentioned by Lambton 1971, 421, and more fully discussed by Dagron 2003.

[66] Al-Azmeh 1997, 109. [67] Rosenthal 1975, 109–12. [68] Crone 2004, 190–1.

[69] Rosenthal 1975, 83. [70] Crone 2004, 184; cf. 193 her phrase 'to actualise the intellect'.

[71] Thus a Pythagorean kind of Plato: Walbridge 2000, 182.

blessings.'[72] For Amir Khusraw such an approach to rule was a way of engaging with the question of the legitimacy of a secular sultanate in Delhi divorced from the caliphate.

It is fair to say that the range of topics found in 'Mirrors for Princes', both Arabic and Persian, is somewhat predictable. They are written from the point of view of a ruler whose prime interest is to 'stay in the saddle' (as Crone puts it). The Byzantine 'Mirrors' too 'did not offer a political ideology, that is, an advanced system, which had perhaps existed in the Hellenistic and Roman models on which they were more or less loosely based. Nor did they amount to an independent and theoretical reflection on the nature of power; they aimed rather to provide whoever exercised power with an antidote which would protect him against the dangers to which he was inevitably exposed'.[73]

Al-Ghazali's work, for example, concentrates on the ethical dimension. The author begins from God: Your kingship is from God, he insists, in a passage which echoes the opening of Themistius' letter to Julian, and then elaborates the point under ten headings that summarise the orthodox Muslim theology. He goes on to enumerate the Branches of the Tree of Faith, first among which is Justice, again dissected under ten headings including the importance of taking the advice of the *'Ulama*, the avoidance of pride, passion and harshness, the need to 'do as you would be done by' and to please one's subjects – but not if it goes against God's law. The 'Springs which Water Faith' are knowledge of this lower world and of the last breath. Ten analogies and five anecdotes elaborate this point, and in the fifth anecdote he speaks of Dhu'l-Qarnayn (Alexander) and his encounter with the people who had graves at the doors of their houses: here he is clearly drawing on the *Romance* tradition about Alexander, who provides a repertory of anecdotes and aphorisms deployed in the work: these anecdotes were mediated through the Arabic compilations of Hunayn ibn Ishaq, Mubashshir and others.[74] Part II is devoted to Justice, much elaborated through anecdotes and aphorisms, and then to the management of staff, where magnanimity is enjoined. But there is nothing on the army, foreign relations or intelligence, for example, all of which are prominent in Themistius (38–42). A series of aphorisms of the sages follows, and – rather tacked on – a discussion of the two specific topics of intelligence and of women.[75]

[72] Lingwood 2014, 64. [73] Dagron 2003, 18. [74] Bagley 1964, 75.

[75] Bagley 1964. The anonymous *Bahr al-Fava'id*, dedicated to the tutor of Prince Arslan of Aleppo, is likewise more homiletic than practical, and notably anti-Shia in tendency. It offers ten main 'action points' (Meisami 1991, 82–3) plus a further ten rules of action (Lambton 1971, 431–4).

A notable feature of these and other 'Mirrors' is the extensive use of historical anecdotes deriving from the more popular tradition and the collections of maxims and sayings. As mentioned, many of those in al-Ghazali refer to Alexander (or Dhu'l-Qarnayn). One not mentioned is that of the dilemma of the man who sold a house which subsequently turned out to contain a buried treasure.[76] The story goes back to Plato's *Laws*, but is told in the Hebrew *Romances* about Alexander. Here it is transferred to the just king Khosrow Anushirvan. (The solution in all cases is the same; one of the two men has a son, the other a daughter, who are obliged to marry each other so as to establish equilibrium.)[77] Nizam al-Mulk too made use of Alexander stories: in most cases he is the recipient of wise advice from Aristotle (never Plato).[78] There are also many Alexander stories in the *Bahr al-Fava'id* – for example the famous story that Dhu'l-qarnain, who conquered the world, insisted that on his bier, one hand be left hanging loose from the shroud to indicate that he departed from the world empty-handed.[79] The story is used to illustrate a couplet that could almost have come from the pen of Omar Khayyam:

O child of earth, eaten by earth, tomorrow you will be eaten and drunk.
Since life is short, what use is abundant wealth?

Another story in this work is about David entering a cave near Jerusalem where he sees a dead man. It is based on the story told originally of Alexander in the *Romance*, of how he encountered the ancient Pharaoh Sesonchosis in a cave, who warned him of the fragility of mortal power. 'David saw a throne there, and a man upon it; a golden tablet was placed upon the throne, on which was written, "I am Fulan ibn Fulan. [The name means 'Somebody son of Somebody'.]. I was king for a thousand years, built a thousand cities, took a thousand women to wife, and defeated a thousand armies, but today my station and abode are in the dust. I could get no bread for dirhams, or gold or jewels; finally I counted the jewels, and ate them, and died of hunger."'[80] Another half dozen stories in the book also refer to Alexander.[81] It is impossible to imagine Themistius, let alone Plato, deploying these admonitions about the vanity of kingship in the way that comes as second nature to the Persian writers.

It can readily be seen that Amir Khusraw's Plato covers much of the same ground as his prose forbears. The prevalence of Alexander stories in

[76] Deriving from Mubashshir's *Mukhtar-al-hikam*.
[77] Stoneman 2008, 121, with previous bibliography.
[78] Schabinger 1987 197, 422, 423 (Buzurjmehr); at 244 Alexander is a model of justice.
[79] Meisami 1991, 51. [80] Meisami 1991, 52. [81] Pages 65, 204, 205, 216, 217, 310.

the anecdotal portions of the texts is perhaps the reason Alexander is a particularly suitable recipient for advice. In composing his poem, Amir Khusraw had an eye not only to creating a lively poetic contribution to the 'Mirror for Princes' genre, but also to his patron's styling of himself a 'second Alexander'. The poem abounds in Sufi metaphors, not least that of the 'mirror' that pervades the second half of the poem and gives the title to the whole. If the king and the Sufi could never, in the nature of things, be combined in a single person, both Plato and Alexander, and Amir Khusraw and Ala al-Din were shining symbols of the symbiosis that had the potential to create the ideal state.

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14 Alexander in Medieval Arab Minds

Archetype of Kings, Magnificent Warrior, and Custodian of Philosophy and Divine Principles

FAUSTINA DOUFIKAR-AERTS

Introduction

More than a millennium after his mysterious death in 323 BC Alexander the Great became the hero and main character in numerous historical, literary and epic traditions in the lands and languages of the entire Islamic world and the non-Islamic communities under Islamic dominion. This tradition is often referred to as the Oriental Alexander tradition. It involves several languages, apart from the corpus in Arabic, which is largely rooted in religious and profane texts about Alexander in Syriac.[1] With the spread of the Arabic language in the Islamised territories the oriental Alexander tradition proliferated as far as Mali in sub-Saharan Africa and al-Andalus in the west, to Turfan in western Mongolia and Malaysia in Southeast Asia, with uncountable writings and narrations in Arabic, Persian, Ge'ez (Ethiopic), Chagatai, Ottoman and other Turkic languages, Mongolian, Javanese, Sundanese and Malay.[2]

The development and the dissemination of the tradition cannot be addressed without reference to historical events in the seventh century. The long rivalry of the Sassanid-Persian and Byzantine empires ended in their final confrontation with the unexpected defeat of the Persian king Khosrow II by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius in 628, and the restoration of Byzantine hegemony in Jerusalem. Soon after, however, from 638 the city found itself under the rule of the Muslim commander, Abū ʿUbayd ibn al-Jarrāḥ, commissioned by the second caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. By then, the Muslims were the new players on the world stage and the region was on the eve of major changes in cultural, religious and administrative affairs, and communication and art, which were to affect private and public life enduringly.[3] It may be in the atmosphere of upheaval and changing circumstances that preachers and seers

1 Doufikar-Aerts 2016a, 190–209.

2 The tradition was the subject of a recent interdisciplinary research project (2012–18) at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam titled 'Beyond the European Myth. In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle and the Transnational Migration of Ideas and Concepts of Culture and Identity'.

3 For a survey of the historical context see Haldon 1997, in particular the introduction and chapters 1 and 2.

launched their apocalyptic visions and forecasts in an attempt to interpret the signs of the juncture. In any case, several Christian Syriac apocalyptic texts saw light in this period as a reaction to these events.[4] In a number of these texts Alexander the Great was staged as the central character. Alexander was thereby reconnected to the present state of that era and given a place in the history of salvation; according to this view and within this framework the ancient Cosmocrator became the forerunner of the Christian Byzantine empire, which would last until the end of time. Alexander's victory over the Persian king Darius almost a millennium earlier paralleled Heraclius' recent victory over Khosrow, so as to construct a Heraclius-Alexander typology.[5]

Origins and Expansion

In this regard the continuity of the tradition through the Hellenistic period and beyond and its revitalisation in seventh-century Syriac apocalyptic writings were crucial elements for the revival of Alexander of Macedon, as a hero in a new cultural landscape.

Subsequently, several grounds can be imagined for why and how Arab authors gave attention to the ancient Macedonian king.[6] In particular the concrete presence of his heritage must have played a role. In the regions outside the Arabian peninsula, first invaded by Muslim armies shortly after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632, many manifestations were still extant from the period of Hellenisation, which started in the third century BC with Alexander's own invasion of the Middle East and Egypt. Apart from the material vestiges, such as the cities founded by Alexander and named Alexandria, as well as artefacts and coins, the administrative language in large parts of the area was Greek.[7] This remained the practice during the reign of the first nine caliphs until the tenth caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (reg. AD 646–705), imposed upon his chancellery in Damascus the change of language from Greek (and Pahlavi) into Arabic around AD 700.

This state of affairs logically provided a direct link to Hellenistic culture and to some extent to its influence in the region, where Alexander's renown had survived. The unceasing environmental presence thereof can also be judged from the fact that well up to the seventh century, recurrent

4 See Van Peursen 2011, 190–3. 5 Reinink 1985, 1992 and 2002.
6 'Arab authors' here indicates authors writing in Arabic of any ethnic background.
7 For instance the fourth-century Baalbek (ancient Heliopolis) floor-mosaic depicting the newborn Alexander in a basin, exhibited nowadays in the National Museum of Beirut.

translations were made of the Greek *Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes into Latin, Armenian, Pahlavi (?) and Syriac and that references to Alexander regularly occurred in histories, philosophical and other works in Latin, Byzantine Greek and Hebrew.[8] In pre-Islamic Jewish tradition, among others in Maccabees[9] and Daniel,[10] as well as in Josephus' *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*[11] and in Talmud and Midrash, he was a character of recurring attention.[12] According to Aleksandra Kleçzar, Josephus staged Alexander in the following way: 'Far from being just a vicious attacker, Alexander turns out to have been God's chosen all along, the foreign king-benefactor blessed by God.'[13] Wout van Bekkum observes that the 'ethical or moral element' is an important feature of the Hebrew traditions concerning Alexander.[14] By the end of the seventh century Alexander had also been incorporated several times as the protagonist in Syriac Christian apocalyptic literary works.

In the light of this, it may not be surprising that Alexander also became a celebrated persona in Arabic literature and beyond. Besides, the tradition came to consist of a multilayered corpus.

Formative Stages of a Multifaceted Image

Alexander's biography and timeline often served as a benchmark in the perception of world history by Muslim and Christian Arab historians. At the same time his reputation as an important figure from pre-Islamic history was expanded and even hallowed from another side. This development is closely related to early Muslim hermeneutic approaches and interpretations of verses in the Qur'an (18:83–100), which tell of an ancient character, Dhū l-Qarnayn ('Two-Horned').

In these Qur'anic verses reference is made to Dhū l-Qarnayn's exploits, and a noticeable element in this passage is the building of a wall to enclose

8 The Greek *Alexander Romance* is dated to the late third century AD. Also see Stoneman 2008, in particular appendixes I and II, 230–54.

9 Maccabees I:1–10, composed in the second century BC.

10 The book of Daniel (8:1–27, 11:3–4) is a pseudonymous apocalyptic text composed in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, also dated to the second century BC.

11 Josephus, *Antiquities* (XI, 8:1–7, XII, 1:1) and *Against Apion* (II, 4) – two historical accounts – from the first century AD. In *Antiquities* Alexander is portrayed as showing reverence to the God worshipped by the Jews and the High Priest of Jerusalem.

12 Talmud, among others *Tamid* (31b–32a –b). For Talmudic literature on Alexander see Kazis 1962, 2, and Midrashim on Alexander before the Geonim era, that is to say 625–1050, see Kazis 1962, 18–24. For an overview of Alexander in Jewish tradition see Stoneman 1994.

13 Kleçzar 2012, 343, referring to *Antiquities* XI, 8.

14 Van Bekkum 1986, 226.

the apocalyptic nations of Yāʿjūj and Māʿjūj (Gog and Magog). This element is also prominent in the Syriac apocalyptic texts. The epithet 'Two-Horned' occurring in the Qur'an for the builder of the wall reminds readers of the depiction of Alexander, particularly in one of the Syriac texts, *Neṣḥānā dīleh d-'Aleksandrōs*, 'Triumph of Alexander'. Here it is affirmed twice that horns were put on Alexander's head by divine intervention.[15] It is known from early sources like tradents ‑ the transmitters of prophetical tradition – and exegetes of the Qur'an that the name Alexander – in its Arabic form, al-Iskandar – was mentioned in relation to Dhū l-Qarnayn.[16] Relators of *qiṣṣas al-anbiyā'* – the *Lives of the Prophets* – also associated the Two-Horned with Alexander.[17] It is not certain whether these mentions of al-Iskandar(īs) / Sandarūs correlate to the oral or written Syriac tradition. However, as early as the first half of the ninth century a source, transmitted by many later geographers, evidences such a connection. Quoting from the travel report by Sallām al-Turjumān, who on behalf of the caliph, Wāthiq bi-'llāh, was sent to inspect the condition of the wall of Gog and Magog, they describe the wall in terms of a gate (*bāb*).[18] According to Sallām, whose travelogue survived in Ibn Khurdadhbeh's *Kitāb al-Masālik*, the gate had a lock and a key with twelve teeth. These details do not derive from the Qur'anic verses, which speak only of a *sadd* (barrier) and *radm* (dam). The lock and key nowhere occur in Islamic tradition on the wall before Sallām. This suggests that Sallām became acquainted with the description of the wall in the *Neṣḥānā*. Sallām had a reputation for mastering thirty languages. He was surnamed Turjumān – interpreter – which makes it conceivable that he read or heard the text in Syriac, but it is also possible that he knew the *Neṣḥānā* description of the wall from its Arabic translation. As a matter of fact, the specific elements of the gate (*bāb*), the upper inscription and lock and key, can be found in an Arabic text. This text integrated parts of the Syriac *Neṣḥānā* in translation and was transmitted by Quzmān. Moreover, the description of the key in both Sallām and Quzmān mirrors

15 Wallis Budge 1889, 146 and 156.

16 For example in Ibn Hishām's († *c.*833) *Sīrat al-Nabī* (*Biography of the Prophet*) ed. 1995, 387, and the report of Wahb ibn Munabbih († *c.*730) in Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, ed. Cairo, 13. In his *Tafsīr* Muqātil ibn Sulaymān († 767) comments on Dhū l-Qarnayn: 'He is al-Iskandar Caesar" (ed. M. Shaḥāta 1983, 599).

17 See Thaʿlabī, Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Moḥ. b. Ibrāhīm an-Nisābūrī († 1036), *Qiṣṣaṣ al-Anbiyā': Arā'is al-Majālis*. Cairo 1954, 359–70.

18 Ibn Khurdādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, ed. De Goeje 1889, 162–70, 165–8 and 170. The caliph, Abū Jaʿfar Hārūn ibn Muḥammad al-Wāthiq bi'llāh (reg. 842–7), was troubled by a dream in which he saw that the wall between the civilised world and Gog and Magog was opened. The transmission of Sallām's expedition has been thoroughly studied and published in a monograph by Emeri van Donzel and Andrea Schmidt (2010).

an identical corrupt rendering from the Syriac text: they equally report that the key is twelve-toothed, whereas it says in the *Neṣḥānā* that the key was twelve cubits long.[19] These details clearly show that parts of the Syriac tradition were in circulation in Arabic by that time. The episodes in the group of manuscripts which I call the Quzmān recension include a complete description of the Gog and Magog episode and the building of the gate as in the *Neṣḥānā* and other motifs from it – namely Alexander's exploration of the Foetid Sea, and the people who in daytime seek protection against the heat of the rising sun, both episodes also characteristic of the *Neṣḥānā*.[20]

Be this as it may, in circles of exegetes the association and identification of Dhū l-Qarnayn as Alexander of Macedon, remained a matter of debate to some extent; in modern exegesis the passage was theologised as a parable, like other such narrations referred to in the Qur'an for their spiritual meaning.[21] Irrespective of any dispute, these early associations lingered and apparently firmly influenced the formation of the genre to the extent that the characters were superimposed on one another. This resulted in texts of a religious, historical and literary character as well as popular narrations and lore which made no distinction between Alexander and Dhū l-Qarnayn. Under both names the same feats were presented, which are known on the one hand from the *Alexander Romance* and on the other from Qur'an commentaries, traditions and prophets' lives. In many cases the protagonist is simply given the composite name 'al-Iskandar Dhū l-Qarnayn'.[22]

Features of Transition

Consequently, Alexander's character in Arabic literature became manifold; he figured as an explorer of flora, fauna, strange creatures and unknown peoples in terra incognita, as a Maecenas of sciences and admirer of sages and philosophers, but his reputation as a man of faith was most strongly

[19] Wallis Budge 1889, 153. Ibn Khurdādhbeh, ed. De Goeje 1998, 166. Also see Van Donzel 2010, 133, and on the variety of transmissions 142–65 and details 166–72. Quzmān in BnF ms arabe 3687, 76r.

[20] The last two motifs also occur in other Arabic derivatives of the *Alexander Romance*. See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 63–4, 79, and Wallis Budge 1889, 148. The people at the place of sunrise, who seek protection in the sea and in caves, seems to bear a resemblance to Dhū l-Qarnayn's arrival at 'a people for whom We had provided no shelter against the sun' in Qur'an verse 18:90.

[21] See Ali 1946, 2.753 and 760.

[22] See chapters 1 and 3 in Doufikar-Aerts 2010: 13–91 and 135–93.

entrenched and omnipresent. His fame as a champion of monotheism was also tightly linked to his renown as a philosopher king. Many authors placed al-Iskandar, as he became known in Arabic, in an entourage of philosophers and wise men who advised him in matters of policy and warfare. Most prominent was his relation to Aristotle, an association which may have caused the effect that Alexander himself was positioned in the ranks of the ancient philosophers.

In the following I examine a number of exemplary texts which have so far not received much systematic attention; they are selected for their formative elements and the way in which they give expression to Alexander's image as an ideal king and wisdom-seeking apostle.

An early text, widely disseminated, consists of a corpus of letters supposedly exchanged between Alexander and Aristotle. It is assumed that this cycle of correspondence was among the first sizable translations of Hellenistic material into Arabic at the Damascene court of the fifteenth caliph, Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (reg. 724–43).[23] The remains of this text survived in several reworked versions, one of which is the famous *Sirr al-Asrār* or, in its renowned Latin translation, *Secretum Secretorum* (*Secret of Secrets*).[24] Another, more archaic version appears to have been preserved in the form of the *Rasā'il Arisṭāṭālīsa ilā 'l-Iskandar* (*The Letters from Aristotle to Alexander*). This compilation, qualified as a 'novel in letters' by Maróth and as 'roman épistolaire' by Grignaschi, was first edited and printed on the basis of manuscripts in 2006 by Miklós Maróth.[25] A third group of texts deriving from this corpus are the so-called *Maqālāt Arisṭāṭālīs* (*Treatises of Aristotle*). Research into this material and the debate about its nature and origin has been ongoing for several decades.[26]

The cycle of correspondence as it has come down to us in the *Rasā'il* apparently displays an early stage in the transition of Hellenistic features into the expanded philosophical and religion-motivated traits of Alexander

[23] He was the fifth successor after and fourth son of the aforementioned ninth caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik. This compilation of letters was mentioned by the ninth-century bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist*, where he claimed that it consisted of 'approximately hundred leaves', Flügel 1871, 117.

[24] Manzalaoui 1974, 147–258. The Castilian versions, *Poridat de las Poridades*, translated from Arabic, and *Secreto de los Secretos*, translated from Latin, were edited anew with introductions by Hugo O. Bizzarri 2010.

[25] Maróth 2005; Grignaschi 1965–6.

[26] Maróth 2006. An earlier partial edition of the *Rasā'il* was made by Mario Grignaschi 1975; also see Gutas 1981, 49–86 and 2009, 59–70; Doufikar-Aerts 2017, 55–66; Maróth 2005, 231–315; Grignaschi 1996, 109–23 and 1994, 205–34. New profound research into the contents of the *Rasā'il*, the *Sirr al-Asrār* and the so-called *Maqālāt* by Aristotle is needed in order to establish the relationship. I am preparing such a study.

in the Oriental tradition. All in all the cycle contains an exchange of letters by Aristotle and Alexander and additional writings, such as an exchange of letters between Philip and Aristotle, a sermon and counsels by Plato and letters from Aristotle and Alexander to the latter's mother. Initially, Aristotle writes in his role as a tutor. Later on, when Alexander has left Macedon, for his campaigns in Asia, Aristotle remains his remote advisor, sending him letters about policy in conquered lands, good governance and warfare, administration, ethics and nature. It is interspersed with sayings attributed to philosophers and celebrities from antiquity, among them the poet Homer, who is cited randomly in the role of a sage. For example Umirūs (Homer) is quoted: 'Wisdom needs a free space so that it becomes deeply rooted in the mind and well-understood'.[27] And 'There is nothing lower than lying; there is no good in a man, if he is a liar'.[28]

When Alexander's education in Athens is finished and he is about to start his rulership, Aristotle composes for him a testament in the presence of his father, Philip:

> The commander of good orders is no luckier than the one who has to obey him, neither has an educated person less benefit from knowledge than the person who is being taught.

This opening sentence in the form of a maxim, which seems to give a lesson in humility – the interdependency of men – remained in circulation, as appears from Mubashshir ibn Fātik's eleventh-century compilation of philosophical maxims.[29] The same motif occurs twice in the same text, in the chapter covering Alexander's biography and in the chapter containing Aristotle's wisdom and ethics (Badawi 1958, 186).

In one of the letters of the *Rasā'il* on good governance of cities it is recommended that 'A person must be aware of the intensity of his anger. A man's anger should neither be extremely outrageous nor too temperate, because the first case is characteristic of lions and the second is behaviour of children.' The poet Homer also spoke disapprovingly about excessive anger, fury and quarrelling: 'There is nothing that will ever satisfy hellfire alone.'[30]

[27] Maróth 2006, 9. [28] Maróth 2006, 16.

[29] Maróth 2006, 12; Mubashshir ibn Fātik († 1100), *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa-Maḥāsin al-Kalim* (*Selection of Proverbs and an Anthology of Sayings*) ed. Badawi 1958, 224. This work had some medieval vogue in Europe; it was translated into Spanish, *Bocados de Oro*, and Latin in the thirteenth century, and later into French by Guillaume de Tignonville in 1402, *Les ditz et faitz des philosophes*, and from French into English, *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, in 1450 by Stephen Scrope.

[30] Maróth 2016, 99. This maxim about anger crops up in other places, like in Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq's *Adāb* ed.1985, 84, and even in another letter from the collection of *Rasā'il*, on the description of the ideal king (Maróth 2006, 31).

Many parts of this cycle were transmitted, in its original form – namely in a version close to the *Rasā'il* – as well as in revised and excerpted versions. A vast corpus of unedited Arabic texts containing such letters of ancient philosophers and references or letters of advice to Alexander remains unstudied.

It is worthwhile taking notice of the presentation of both Aristotle and Alexander in the *Rasā'il*. On the one hand the letters and treatises open a window to the ancient world of philosophers, sages, physicians, scientists and heroes, with many references to historical places, names and personae. On the other hand the contents reveal a world of pre-Islamic, pseudo-ancient, Hellenistic wisdom texts. It is indicative in this respect that in the *Rasā'il* no mention is made of the epithet Dhū l-Qarnayn for Alexander, nor of Gog and Magog. This underscores the fact that we are dealing with an older layer and manifestation of the text not yet adapted to the later mainstream features. Many letters are short of the introductory opening with formulaic prayers and the conventional *basmalah*, which is known to have become standard practice in Islamic and earlier Christian Arab transmissions. We also find references to Mount Olympus as 'the eternal abode of the gods' and to 'Zeus, who spread the heavens.'[31] Furthermore, there is a curious detail in an advice with regard to provisions for the army and management of the troops: 'Do not forbid them drinking, because it encourages them when going for war and on campaigns'.[32] Although it is not said outright that this passage relates to drinking wine, the description of the alleged effects of drinking suggest it does. The fact that this detail was maintained in the text, at odds with Islamic doctrines, points to the pre-Islamic stratum. All the same, some sections of the cycle have been Islamised in some stage of the transmission, while others seem untouched, without purification of sacrilegious elements. Transmitters of texts based on non-Islamic sources usually preferred to adapt or omit awkward content and wording so as to bring the text in line with the Islamic perspective. In the course of time hardly any such disliked verbatim transmission seems to have survived.

This may be demonstrated with an example: in the Greek and Syriac versions of Alexander's meeting with the Brahmans the concept 'providence from above' is used in their conversation about immortality.[33] When Alexander admits that he is not able to give the Brahmans immortality on

[31] Maróth 2006, 127. [32] Maróth 2006, 80.

[33] In Greek '*ἐκ τῆς ἄνω προνοίας* '/ *ek tes ano pronoias*, Van Thiel 1983, 132 / Carolus Muller 1846, 101 / '*ἐκ τῆς ἄνωθεν προνοίας*', Stoneman 2012, 234. The word *ano* / *anothen* 'higher up' indicates: in relation to the human world.

their request because he is himself a mortal, they ask why he conquers the world, although 'it will remain with others' once he is dead. The answer is that this is all ordained by high providence, which in the Syriac text is expressed thus: 'All these things happen by the providence and the will of heaven, and we wait on the heavenly command; for just as the waves of the sea are not lifted up unless the wind blows upon them . . . so neither are men able to do anything without a command from above. . . . Every one of us then who plunders something from another leaves it again to someone else, and we depart naked and empty!'[34]

In an early Arabic version of this episode, by ʿUmāra ibn Zayd, he says, as an answer to the Brahmans' critical questions: 'This is inescapable, I do not do this in my own interest, but my Lord sends me to reveal his religion . . . Don't you know that the waves in the sea do not move, unless they are blown upon by the wind, and likewise if God Almighty (*Allāhu ʿazza-wa-jalla*) had not sent me I would not have left my country but stayed at home, but I take action against the idolaters in obedience to my Lord and I execute His command, until my time comes and I will have to depart from the world, naked as I arrived in it.'[35]

This dialogue underwent a conversion, not only in wording, but particularly the objective was changed either because this fitted better with Alexander's reputation-in-development, or because the concept of 'providence from a higher place' was not pointing unambiguously enough to Divine Providence. Concurrently, a monotheistic message could smoothly be integrated.

Returning to the *Rasā'il*, the surviving text gives the impression that it has not been converted in the way most texts on Alexander and other material with pre-Islamic content were later on. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the text is void of a religious tenor, but not specifically Islamic, except for some apparently adapted and interpolated passages.[36] This demonstrates how Alexander and Aristotle, only gradually, seem to have been moulded into the soon dominant template of missionary monotheistic popular philosophy. In this respect, it is worth noting that Aristotle's image also underwent significant modification. In several texts, in particular the afore-mentioned *Maqālāt Arisṭāṭālīs*, we find introductory

[34] Wallis Budge 1889, 93–4.

[35] ʿUmāra ibn Zayd (767?–815), *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar* (*The Story of Alexander*) ms. London B.M. Add. 5928, ff. 42a. See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 39.

[36] As an exception the letter on good governance of cities ends with the words 'may peace and compassion of God be upon you' and an additional line with a formulaic prayer with graciousness to God and blessings upon the Prophet and his kin (Maróth 2006, 101). On the Christian influence in some parts of the cycle see Maróth 2005, 251–8.

paragraphs about Aristotle in the role of tutor and advisor-for-life to Alexander. Two remarkable statements can be found therein. It is said that, according to the historiography of the Greeks, God revealed to Aristotle that calling him an angel would be closer to the truth than calling him a man. Moreover, people didn't agree on his death and burial. Some said he was buried in a renowned grave, one of the pyramids, but others said he was lifted up into the air in a column of light.[37] This vision recalls the status of Enoch and Elijah as depicted in biblical tradition (Genesis 5:24 and Kings 2:11).

Alexander Featuring in Biography

By the ninth century longer and shorter Arabic biographies of Alexander were in circulation. The framework of these accounts was based on the aforementioned *Alexander Romance*, which was generally considered a historical work.[38] These biographical surveys were handed down as part of historical works, lives of the prophets, wisdom literature and, rarely, as autonomous texts.

The original Greek *Alexander Romance*, dated to the end of the third century AD, also called Pseudo-Callisthenes after its pseudo-author, was elaborated and has survived in several recensions. The translations of this legendary biography in Arabic mainly derive from a δ* recension – no longer extant – generally held to be rooted in an α-type recension.[39]

Most historians gave a summarised version of Alexander's life and exploits, choosing the most appealing or relevant episodes for their surveys.

[37] These statements occur in the introductions, specifically of Aristotle's *Maqālāt*, ascribed to Yaḥyā ibn al-Biṭrīq, like in Ms. BnF arabe 82[11], 2428 and 2421, Princeton Ms. Garrett no. 462H. Also the tenth-century Andalusian physician Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn Ḥassan ibn Juljul reports them in his encyclopaedia of physicians and sages, *Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā' wa-l-Ḥukamā'*, ed. Sayyid 1955, 27.

[38] See chapter 1 in Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 13–91.

[39] On the Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition see note 38. A thorough systematic study into the relationship between Arabic and Greek is now available in C. Voigt's *Recherches* (2016). She examined the Arabic translations of the *Alexander Romance*, going through abridged pieces and episodes which were transmitted by different authors representing the text in brought lines. This was done so, because the text of the Arabic *Alexander Romance* – referred to here as the Quzmān recension, of which I am preparing a first edition with translation – is not yet available in print. On the basis of her investigations into this material she concludes that in many cases a Greek β recension of the *Romance* has played a decisive role. This is in line with recent research into the Syriac *Alexander Romance* by Jan van Ginkel – see note 2 – who deems this text, and for that matter the δ* recension, much more related to the β recension than hitherto supposed.

One of the first biographical résumés edited and printed in modern times was the one compiled by the Egyptian author Mubashshir ibn Fātik.[40] It was part of his anthology of lives and maxims of ancient philosophers, the *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam*. The outline of the biographical part on Alexander stems from the δ*-branch of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition and is related to the Syriac translation of the *Alexander Romance*, made around 600. Bruno Meissner noted the connection in his 1895 German translation, and Karl Friedrich Weymann followed suit in 1901.[41]

Close reading of Mubashshir's compilation reveals that he also excerpted from the contents of the *Rasā'il* for his chapters on Aristotle and Alexander, and that he fitted in the episodes in harmony with the concept for his own compilation. At the same time significant changes can be observed between the early template and Mubashshir's compilation, such as the introduction of the name Dhū l-Qarnayn for Alexander. Mubashshir's biographical summary reports that Aristotle wrote a testament for King Philip's son, Alexander, on the king's demand; he gives only the opening sentence, based on the *Rasā'il*.[42] In contrast, the *Rasā'il* handed down the testament in full.[43] It is obvious that Mubashshir at this point took an excerpt from the *Rasā'il*; he repeats a number of truncated phrases, among them the phrase which announces Philip's death, saying that his disease was aggravated (*ashtaddat 'illatuhu*) and that he died (*thumma qaḍā (naḥbuhu)*). In fact this paragraph gives evidence of a confusing mingling of sources: in the previous passage Mubashshir had related how Philip died – namely after he had been attacked by Pausanias (Fāwus) and was fatally injured by the assailer's sword. This dramatic death scene derives from Pseudo-Callisthenes. The second announcement of Philip's death from illness therefore is inaccurate and superfluous; apparently, it was an addition taken from another source – indeed, the *Rasā'il* – and inserted carelessly in Mubashshir's biography. Then, immediately after the reference to the testament in Mubashshir it is said 'Alexander Dhū l-Qarnayn' turns to the people in a sermon. The composite name appears here for the first time in the text and there is no explanation why he is called by that name. Observably, it required no comment since it had become an established combination by that time – that is the eleventh century. In his subsequent

[40] The full title is given in note 29. The edition and German translation by Bruno Meissner appeared in 1895. It contained only the chapters on Alexander. The full text of Mubashshir was first edited and printed in 1958 by Abderrahman Badawi.

[41] See Meissner 1895, 620–5 and Weymann 1901, in particular pages 29–50. A definitive picture of the origin of the text is still under discussion: see Cottrell 2010.

[42] Cited above, also see note 29. Badawi 1958, 224 / Meissner 1895, 587.

[43] Maróth 2006, 12–19.

addresses to the people, the governors and the armies, which convey missionary messages, the name Dhū l-Qarnayn is repeatedly used. The governors are encouraged to abandon the worship of the stone idols of their forefathers and to turn to the service of the Lord. The sermons and letters to his subjects, governors, armies and kings are an interesting motif worth examining more precisely. They were issued at the very beginning of his kingship and their manifestation is current in the Arabic tradition; as to content, they have replaced the addresses to the Macedonians, Thracians, Thessalonians and the citizens of other Greek city states, which are known from the Greek, Latin, Armenian and Syriac recensions of the *Alexander Romance*; these are belligerent and their main concern is to convince the veterans to remain in the army. Unlike these, the addresses in Mubashshir and other Arabic biographical texts on Alexander have different, missionary contents.[44]

Their origin has not yet definitely been identified. They may derive from or be inspired by the topics in wisdom texts. At first sight they may appear to be Islamic in nature because of the persistent use of the name Dhū l-Qarnayn. However, a closer examination shows that this is too facile as a single argument. The sermons and letters to the people, governors and kings with their respective responses are given in Mubashshir only in abbreviated form. A more complete form of these abridged discourses can be found in Quzmān. Here, they have highly proselytising and admonitory contents, and they appear to be of a hybrid Islamic-Christian character.[45] The Quzmān recension of the *Alexander Romance* is supposedly intermediary to the Syriac and Ethiopic versions of the *Romance*.[46]

What makes this motif even more intriguing is the fact that Mubashshir's chapters of the *Mukhtār* on Aristotle and Alexander were also preserved in a manuscript passed on by a Christian scribe, hitherto unknown. The text of the manuscript differs on certain points from the texts edited by Badawi (1958) and Meissner (1895). The aforementioned passage of the abridged speeches and letters contains a number of additions in sentences and phrases, which sometimes change the meaning of the expressed thought. The beginning of the first address, which can almost be read as an election speech, runs as follows:

44 See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 81 n. 242 and 88–9.

45 For the hybrid character of the letters and speeches in the Quzmān recension see Doufikar-Aerts 2016b, in particular 1041. Also see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 88–9.

46 I discovered several manuscripts containing this text, which for centuries was considered lost. The discovery of one the manuscripts I owe to colleague Adel Sidarus. Currently, I am preparing a critical edition with translation. See Doufikar-Aerts 2003b and 2010, 58–73.

> O people, your king passed away, I am not your king, neither your commander, nor your ruler. You may choose any man among you, whom you wish, and make him your king. I will observe obedience to him. I am one of you and I do not differ from you in any of your affairs. Listen to my words and my counsels and give me the status of your sincere advisor, a brother, who safeguards your interests. You know that I have been likewise when my father was still alive. I order you to observe devoutness and obedience of the Lord.[47]

Furthermore, Alexander strongly advises the people to choose their king from among men who are obedient to the Lord. The king should be a man who is compassionate and gentle to his subjects and who looks after their interests. Most important is also that he should make no difference in his judgement between a powerful and a deplorable person – he should not spare the rich because of their wealth, nor the poor for their poverty – that is he should judge them only on the basis of their conduct, rightfully and equitably. He should take pains for the improvement of their affairs and not let passions distract him from taking care of their interests, safeguard them from evil, meet with their appeals for welfare and fight their enemies. Alexander's conditions, which he launches at the moment of his accession to the throne, deal with adhering to monotheism and the command to his subjects to be devotional and obedient to the Lord.

Remarkably, this scene is very reminiscent of the enthronement of the Roman emperor Jovianus Flavius (331–64).[48] According to Socrates Scholasticus, the Christian general Jovian was proclaimed emperor by his military staff after the death of Flavius Claudius Julianus (331–63). The latter was nicknamed Apostata for his virulent anti-Christian policies. However, Jovian refused to be invested with the imperial dignity unless the troops would profess to the Christian faith because he would not reign over worshippers of idols. Upon this statement the soldiers declared themselves Christians.[49]

This impression is intensified by the second address – namely in Alexander's letter 'to all the quarters of his realm' – in which he also reveals compelling recommendations.

47 My translations and summaries, here and in what follows, are on the basis of ms. BnF arabe 309, 16v–18r. I thank Dr Karim Ifrak for drawing my attention to this manuscript.

48 I owe this suggestion to my late father, the Byzantinologist Willem J. Aerts († 2017).

49 *Ecclesiastical Histories* 3:22.

> From Dhū l-Qarnayn of Macedon, to so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, God (*Allāh*)[50] is my Lord and your Lord and my Creator and your Creator. . . . He showed me what is wrong – He is God, the only *deity* who is to be worshipped in exclusion of any other creature –. I praise Him for the blessings He bestowed upon me and I thank Him for His benevolence towards me, His mercy upon me, and I ask Him to let me bring my mission to a good end. You know that our forefathers and your forefathers worshipped idols other than God Almighty: these are useless, they neither help nor harm, they neither hear nor see. Whosoever is capable of mind must take this to heart and come round for his own good. He must abandon the devotional service of painted idols and not take them *as gods*. From now on, turn to worshipping God Almighty, He is more entitled to prostration and reverence than stones – this is also a long sermon.

In this copy from the *Mukhtār*, written down by a Christian scribe, apparently some elements survived which were left out in the copies by Muslim scribes on which Badawi (224) and Meissner (588) based their editions. Here the letter is addressed to 'the governors of his kingdom'. The phrases referring to godheads (*āliha*) and taking an idol as a god (*ilāh*) are present here, but omitted in the 'Islamic' manuscripts. Also absent is the initial statement: 'He is God, the only deity.' It seems to express the same idea as the known Muslim creed *Lā Ilāha illa 'Llāh*, there is no deity except God. However, here it is put in other words. The fact that this manuscript exhibits a lesser abridged form with some additional phrases gives the impression that it may represent a prior template.[51]

Yet another example shows that it is complicated to draw decided conclusions from the differences between the copies of Muslim and Christian scribes. In the printed editions (Badawi 237 / Meissner 599) we find at the end of the biography, in the summary of Alexander's exploits, that 'he built the *sadd*', meaning the wall, to enclose Gog and Magog. In the 'Christian' copy we find that 'he built the city of Sind', possibly instead of 'the city of Soghd'.[52] Although the variance may have been caused by a scribal error, the result is meaningful. It is indicative of the influence of

[50] Arab Christians and Muslims similarly use the word *Allah*, the sole word for God in the monotheistic sense.

[51] This is the case for the chapter about Alexander, but not for the whole text of Mubashshir.

[52] BnF ms. arabe 309, 27v. In Arabic script the difference between *al-sadd* and *al-Sind* is a minor one: السد \ السند. Considering, however, that the word 'city' is not semantically adequate, it seems that the original reading may have been the 'city of Soghd', السغد, although in the Syriac *Alexander Romance* it occurs as the 'country of Sōd' (1889, 113) and similarly in ʿUmāra (BM Add. 5928: 55r) and Pseudo-Aṣmaʿī الصغد (Cambridge, ms. Qq. 225: 77v).

Alexander's image as builder of the wall, an element which is not original to the *Alexander Romance* or to the *Rasā'il*; this strong impact may have facilitated the replacement of Soghd / Sind in favour of the wall (*sadd*).

That the copy of the Christian scribe seems more original – which can be said only tentatively at this stage – may also be concluded from an addition in the editions; in the letter to Fūr (Porus) Alexander (Dhū l-Qarnayn) boasts that God has granted him victory over his enemies and that 'He established my power in the land' (Badawi 234 / Meissner 596). This sentence is missing in the Christian codex. It is probably inserted in the Islamic manuscripts – it is a clear reference to the Qur'an 18:84 about Dhū l-Qarnayn: 'We established his power on earth.'[53]

From the content of the sermons and letters it can be perceived that Alexander's reputation as a warlord had fused with the character of the missionary Two-Horned. And notably this feature transpires regardless whether the text was transmitted in Islamic or Christian cycles. Not surprisingly, these qualifications of an ideal king, warlord and apostle are in a nutshell exactly the qualities ascribed to Alexander at least as early as the ninth century.

Religious Zeal and Wisdom

Historical works on Alexander mainly retained the pattern of the legendary *Alexander Romance* as far as it survived in Arabic. This has been shown for all known works of Arab historians.[54] Nevertheless, in the choice of motifs, which are extant in surveys and abstracts, certain preferences of authors and transmitters can be discerned.

In the historical part (V) of the general encyclopaedia, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, by al-Nuwayrī (1272–1332) a chapter can be found on 'The Kings of the Greeks and Their Descent'.[55] In this account we see an eclectic sequence of motifs from different sources. Apart from common elements from the Alexander tradition not listed here, a feature stands out in his compilation.

53 The other way around, that the Christian copyist adapted an earlier copy from a Muslim scribe, is theoretically possible, but less probable, firstly in the light of this missing sentence, but also because the Christian scribe would not have objections against presenting Alexander as a cosmocrator by divine will. If this sentence had been in the text there was no reason to remove it.

54 See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, especially in the final conclusion on the Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition at 76–91.

55 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad bin ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (*The Ultimate Aim on the Arts of Culture*) (1923) (Cairo ed.), 234.

Some details appear to be presented as opposite facts. Nuwayrī, who refers to Ibn Miskawayh as his source, conveys that the king of China visits Alexander in his camp incognito as his own ambassador.[56] After a civilised and sensible conversation between the two in private, the 'envoy' leaves. The next morning, however, he returns with a great display of power and Alexander and his troops find themselves surrounded by a huge army. After the king of China has demonstrated that he only wanted to make clear that he does not submit out of weakness and incompetence, he states that he wanted to show Alexander humility; kings should submit only to divine orders. Alexander leaves in great admiration for the king's cleverness.[57] This version of the meeting with the king of China is opposite to the underlying story as transmitted in the Syriac *Alexander Romance*, where it is Alexander who visits the other incognito.[58]

Nuwayrī also mentions an exchange of letters between Alexander and Aristotle, including the one about his intended measures with regard to the Persian nobility, known as the policy of the *Mulūk al-Ṭawāʿif* (petty kings).[59] Surprisingly, he has a similar correspondence with Aristotle about a group of Greeks in his army, whom he mistrusts concerning his own safety because of their reckless attitude. He consults Aristotle because he hesitates to have these men killed on the basis of mere suspicions. Aristotle advises to take good care of them and allot them beautiful women because it will have an appeasing effect. And he should show them good character. 'When a slave is sold, he does not care about his new master's financial position but about his morals.'[60]

Nuwayrī dwells on a few other themes of wisdom literature, such as the story of the Indian sage Kand, which is known among others from al-Masʿūdī.[61] At the end of his 'history of the Greeks' he has a section with funeral sentences.[62] In the main it seems Nuwayrī has a predilection for

56 He mentions the work, *Tajārib al-Umam* (*Experiences of Nations*), of this Persian philosopher, who lived in the period 932–1030.

57 Nuwayrī 1923, 250–1. This same reverse version was transmitted by Ibn al-Athīr in *Kitāb al-Kamil fī 'l-Tārīkh* (*Book of the Complete History*); see the 1856 edition by C. J. Tornberg. See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 26.

58 Wallis Budge 1889, 109–13. In many Arabic versions it is Alexander who teaches the king of China a lesson and even insults him. See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 84.

59 Nuwayrī 1923, 241–2. It refers to the system Alexander allegedly installed in the Persian realm after his defeat of Darius. It possibly points to the reign of the Diadochi.

60 Nuwayrī 1923, 240–1.

61 There is also an extensive version in the *Shahnameh* by Firdawsī. See Davies 2007, 475–83. For other versions see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 87. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab* (*Meadows of Gold*), ed. Pellat 1966, I, 14–23. Also see note 69.

62 See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 'Alexander As Mourned Ruler: The Philosophers' Funeral Sentences', 123–8 And Doufikar-Aerts, 2021, 53–55.

themes from wisdom literature and that he sympathises with 'the Persian cause', although in retrospect.

In another chronicle of world history, entitled *Kitāb Akhbār al-Zamān* (*Chronicle of Times*), Alexander is listed as the ninety-second king in the range of Persian kings, as the successor of Dārā (Darius).[63] This *Chronicle* was transmitted in the name of the unknown 'learned *shaykh* Yuḥannā, alias al-Ḥādiq'.[64] According to the introduction to the book, it contains a history of the forefathers, prophets, kings and judges from the creation of Adam to the Messiah. Al-Ḥādiq conveys that he assembled and investigated books during three years in different regions and that he wrote the book in order to convince a Jew with whom he had been in dispute about the Messiah. When he finished the book he presented it to an assembly of Jews. When he had read it to them they immediately converted to Christianity, except for the man for whom he had started the research and written the book, who had silently left the gathering. This may be a topos of apologetic literature. It is interesting, however, to view the list of Yuḥannā's sources: he refers to Genesis (*Sifr al-Khalīqa*), a Hexaemeron (*al-Aximarus*) ascribed to Father Epiphanius the archbishop of Cyprus (*al-Ab Abīfāniyūs Usquf Qubruṣ*), the book of Kings of the Israelites, the book of Ezra (*Kutub ʿAzrā al-ʿUzayr*), the books of Ruth (*Kitāb Rāghūth*), the book of Judith (*Kitāb Yahūdīt*), the book of Esther, the books of Solomon's Wisdom, the book of Yūsuf ibn Kariyūn (Joseph ben Gorion, also known as Yosippon) and the book of Job (Ayyūb). As his last source he mentions the eighty-one books of the Jacobite Christians (*Yaʿāqiba*) and the lives of the Fathers (al-Ḥādiq: 3 r–3 v).

Although there is no date for this work, there is reason to believe that its composition would not predate the Arabic translation of Yosippon, so apparently not before the eleventh century.[65] Near the end of the book he stages as an authority al-Manbaji, identified as Bishop Agapius of Manbaj, who died in the first half of the tenth century.[66] In the Alexander chapter the author sometimes refers to 'the historian', by whom Yosippon may have been intended. He produces a remarkable account about Alexander's

63 The complete title is *Kitāb Fāḍil fī l-Bayān yudʿā Kitāb Akhbār al-Zamān* (*Book of Well Presented Facts, Called the Chronicle of Times*). However, in the end colophon (213r) the title is given as *Safīnat al-Ṭamān wa-Akhbār al-Zamān*, also called *Kitāb al-Tārīkh* (*Ship / (Anthology?) of Serenity and History of Times, Called Book of History*). So far this text is known only from the Paris manuscript, BnF arabe 4702, comprising 214 folios.

64 BnF ms. arabe 4702, 2r and 213r. The scribe dated his copy to the year 1787.

65 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Zechariah ibn Sa'id al-Yamani, by Isidore Singer and Max Schloessinger.

66 The Melkite bishop Maḥbūb ibn Quṣṭantīn al-Manbajī of Hieropolis / Bambyce in Syria († 941–2). See al-Ḥādiq, 210r.

reign. He is introduced as Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedon, also called Dhū l-Qarnayn.[67]

His nickname is explained here as follows. At the moment of Alexander's birth Alexander's father, Philip, is warned by a celebrated astrologer that the child will be unfortunate and a deplorable loser if he is born in this ominous 'hour of disaster'. Philip pushes the midwife to take drastic measures: she must prevent his wife from delivering the baby. The midwife stretches her leg and successfully blocks the birth canal of the woman in labour with her heel until the unfortunate hour has passed. Then Alexander's mother is given free rein to deliver. However, the midwife's intervention left traces on the head of the newborn. This caused two bones to grow from the cranium, looking like horns: this is why he was called Two-Horned.

Yuḥannā elaborates on Alexander's minister, Aristotle, who has eminent knowledge of astrology and magic. He counsels Alexander and accordingly writes books on his behalf, among others the *Kitāb al-Siyāsa li-Tadbīr al-Riyāsa*, which probably refers to the aforementioned *Sirr al-Asrār*.[68] He also fabricates rings with talismans which can make it rain in case of extreme drought. Aristotle instructs him in advance how to deal with an elephant attack by the Indian king. The author deems it of interest to highlight Alexander's reaction to the suggestion that he should marry the deceased Darius' wife. 'It is a shame, when we kill brave men, ruin walls, destroy wicked kings, conquer strong fortresses, devastate impenetrable fortifications, that we would submit to a woman. This will never happen as long as I am alive!'[69]

In another episode he describes encounters with wondrous species, among them a stallion with three horns. The middle horn on the forehead of the animal seems to neutralise and protect against poisoned water. On Alexander's command the men kill the stallion on a hunt and bring the horn to Alexander, who has it made into a potion, a cup and a dagger sheath. The possession of these objects should safeguard the king from poisoned food or drinks. Ironically, however, it is precisely in the next episode that the author reports that a servant poured Alexander a cup of poisoned wine. When he seeks to avert the danger by drinking from the potion mixed with water, his condition only worsens. He lies down on

67 Al-Iskandar ibn Fīlibas al-Yūnānī al-Maqdūnī, wa-yusammā Dhū l-Qarnayn (al-Ḥādiq, 148v).

68 Normally known as *Kitāb al-Siyāsa* fī-*Tadbīr al-Riyāsa*. He also names a second book title: *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*.

69 Al-Ḥādiq, 148v–149r. Varieties can be found in other compilations; see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 114.

a hauberk and a servant places a gold decorated shield above his head to protect him from the heat of the sun. As soon as he becomes aware of the situation he speaks: 'Oh God, God Almighty living forever and ever, who will never die, this makes the words of my tutor, the wise Aristotle, come true about what he saw would happen at the end. Do you see this soil of steel and this heaven of gold?'[70] Then, he dictates the famous Letter of Consolation to his mother and dies. This took place, according to Yuḥannā, in the year 5239 of the world. His remains were brought to Alexandria (al-Ḥādiq, 151 v–152 r).

This selection of themes from Yuḥannā al-Ḥādiq's *Chronicle* mirrors a variety of intensions and sources, such as a particularised and remarkable version of Pseudo-Callisthenes' story of Alexander's birth. The role of Nectanebo has been more or less transposed to Philip. This episode is not known from other biographies, but it is faintly reminiscent of the descent story in the *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar* of Umāra ibn Zayd.[71] For the three-horned animal he draws upon the broadly disseminated *mirabilia* and, in line with some works of wisdom literature, he portrays Aristotle as a sage with magical and predicting powers.

Although he gives a very prosaic and secular explanation for Alexander's epithet Dhū l-Qarnayn, he nevertheless depicts Alexander as a believer in the monotheistic tradition, in evidently Christian formulaic expressions. In the main Yuḥannā seems to have a preference for an emphasis on mythical dimensions.

Finally, Alexander's religious zeal is most expressively articulated in the genre of the popular epics. In the various recensions of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* (*Biography of Alexander*) we find a complete heroic saga of the protagonist al-Iskandar Dhū l-Qarnayn, who travels around the world in order to convert all the nations on earth to monotheism. The contents of the narrations, which are preserved mainly in manuscripts, do not have much in common with the tradition of the *Alexander Romance*.[72] The structure and outline of the epics are completely different, but in some cases episodes from the *Romance* can be traced in a number of manuscripts.[73] These episodes have been interpolated

[70] For the predictions about Alexander's death see Doufikar-Aerts 2021, 42–8.

[71] See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 37 and 1994, 336. The latter reviews a slightly different version in the *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (*Life of Animals*) by al-Damīrī. In these versions either Alexander's mother or father is an astrologer who determines the right moment of conception for the birth of an immortal son, but they fail and are giving birth instead to a world conqueror.

[72] For a critical introduction to the genre and texts see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, chapters 4 and 5, pages 196–277. A summary of the contents of one of the manuscripts can be found in chapter 7, pages 281–367. Also see Doufikar-Aerts 2003c and 2020.

[73] See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 74–6.

from independent translations from the Syriac *Alexander Romance* into Arabic and they form part of all kinds of scattered manuscripts of the popular epic of Alexander.[74]

In a late Maghribī copy of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* Alexander is presented as a missionary figure with explicit Islamic features.[75] The text of the manuscript, which contains only 281 pages, gives a somewhat eccentric version of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* in a summarised form. It is introduced on the title page with the heading 'This is the biography of Alexander Dhū l-Qarnayn and it contains unique stories and the beginning and cause of his particular circumstances and the transmission of his affairs and this book was composed from the *Book of History* by al-Masʿūdī, may God have mercy upon him.'[76]

Towards the end of the manuscript we find two episodes which illustrate Alexander's religious zeal. They show in particular that Alexander's actions have completely merged with the image of the Qur'anic Dhū l-Qarnayn.[77] In the first of these episodes it is told that Alexander and his companion, al-Khiḍr, arrived on their travels at the place of sunrise. There, they encounter a number of angels out of the 70,000 who guard the course of sunrise and sunset. It is said here, explicitly, that 'the angels greet al-Khiḍr and King Alexander, saying: "Peace be upon you, o friend of God (*Walī Allāh*)[78] and upon you, o Dhū l-Qarnayn, and God's mercy and blessings be upon you".'[79] Soon after they arrive in the valley from which Yajūj and Mājūj attack Alexander's armies. During the fierce fight al-Khiḍr withdraws for prayer. In the middle of the night an angel descends who reveals to him that King al-Iskandar must build the *sadd* (wall against Gog and Magog). After failed negotiations with the king of Gog and Magog, named Qānūn, Alexander constructs the wall that keeps them in isolation until the return of ʿIsā (Jesus) from the heavens.[80] The description of the wall corresponds in the main with those in other copies of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar*, but there are

74 For example, Doufikar-Aerts 1999, 2003a (*The Last Days of Alexander*), 2000 and 2013 (*Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem Arabica*).

75 Preserved in the Paris collection of Arabic manuscripts (ms. arabe 6806), dated 1264 H. (=1848 ECE)

76 *Kitāb al-Tālīkh* (!) = *al-Tārīkh*. The composer probably refers to one of the works of the celebrated historian Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī († 956). About this author see note 61. See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 24. The author's claim, however, is highly questionable.

77 For the characterisation of the Dhū l-Qarnayn tradition see chapter 3 of Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 136–93.

78 The recurrent epithet of the saint, al-Khiḍr, in the popular epics.

79 BnF ms. arabe 6806, 267 and the following summary is on the basis of 267–9.

80 For more details of this corresponding episode in manuscript Aya Sofya 3004 see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 219–22.

also some details in common with the travel report by Sallām, such as the key and gate (*bāb*). This means that these sources were reused into the middle of the nineteenth century. According to the compiler his source states that up to his own time the gate was under the protection of demons, appointed by Alexander to remain there until the end of time. He also quotes the Qur'an 18:98 about God's promise coming true. The second episode is a chapter introduced with the words 'Report of King Alexander's departure for Mecca – may God grant it glory'.[81]

At the end of his exploratory and missionary campaigns Alexander heads for Mecca. Al-Khiḍr explains that the sanctuary was made by Ibrāhīm (Abraham) in anticipation of the future Arab 'seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭallib ibn Hāshim'. When Alexander hears about the virtues and feats of this future prophet he decides to call in on the Sacred House of God (*Bayt Allāh al-Ḥarām*) – by which the Kaaba is meant – and he prays to God that he be granted the grace of intercession by this noble future prophet.

Alexander and his troops first camp on the mountain (ʿArafāt?). Then they leave for al-Muzdalifa and finally they go to Mecca, where they all perform the ritual *ṭawāf*s. Alexander bestows precious gifts unto the 'sons of Ismaʿīl' and he stays in Mecca for five days. The epic ends with chapters on Alexander's visit of the city of Brass and his expedition to the Land of Darkness in search of the Water of Life and finally it concludes with the well-known Letter of Consolation written by Alexander to his mother and a good number of funeral speeches. I need not explain that the rituals Alexander performs in the sacred house mirror the rituals that are part of the yearly Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. The manuscript was written by a scribe named Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Ṣafʿāfī and precisely dated to 4 October 1848.

The examination of this manuscript demonstrates a continuous tradition of *siyar* (popular epics) on Alexander well into the nineteenth century. From earlier research it is known that it started no later than the fourteenth century and that Alexander's religious zeal in these epics has become exemplary.[82] From the prayers, the association with typically Islamic issues and entourage it can be perceived that this is the clearest illustration of the fact that the characters Alexander and Dhū l-Qarnayn are superimposed on one another in this tradition.

[81] BnF ms. Arabe 6806, 270–1. [82] See Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 262–3.

Closing Remarks

Alexander the Great's heritage became part of Arab minds just as enduringly as it had been part of Hellenistic culture. In this colourful selection of text fragments it transpires that certain aspects of his image, highly built on his legendary personality and feats, became magnified depending on the authors' and transmitters' focusses and purpose. As the title suggested, Alexander came to represent the archetype of kings, a magnificent warrior and the custodian of philosophy and the foremost divine principles, regardless of the Islamic or Christian background of the compiler.

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15 Alexander in the Age of Shakespeare

The Monarchicke Tragedies of Sir William Alexander

RICHARD STONEMAN

Elizabethan Authors

It is, perhaps, a puzzle that Shakespeare, who wrote so much about the heroes of Rome, never authored a play on a major Greek hero. Two of his three Greek plays are romance-based (*Pericles*, *Troilus and Cressida*), while the third centres around the unfortunate Timon. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* notionally takes place in a wood outside Athens but actually in a dreamland. Although Thomas North's great translation of Plutarch's *Lives* was well known to Shakespeare, he took from it only Roman themes.

Shakespeare's Alexander remains in an essentially medieval mould in the three passages where he is mentioned. The Alexander invoked by Nathanael in *Love's Labours Lost* recalls the hero of the Nine Worthies,[1] while Hamlet's melancholy comment is infused with the idea of mutability and the ever-turning Wheel of Fortune;[2] Fluellen in *Henry V* offers a Senecan comment on Alexander's vices.[3] Two other plays by Elizabethan authors take Alexander as a theme: John Lyly's *Campaspe* (1578) revolves around the conflict of love and duty, in which Alexander virtuously proves himself able to take the right course, while Samuel Daniel's *Tragedy of Philotas* (1604) casts Alexander as the villain in Philotas' downfall.[4] Fortune is to the fore in a play by another contemporary of Shakespeare's, Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590).

[1] See v.ii.557ff., where Nathaniel appears as the hero with the words
'When in the world I liv'd, I was the world's commander;
By east, west, north and south, I spread my conquering might:
My scutcheon plain declares that I am Alisander.'

[2] See v.i.201–5: 'Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?
'Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.'

[3] See iv.7: 'Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicate in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Cleitus.'

[4] See the detailed discussion in Stoneman 2013.

This makes little play with Alexander despite his importance as an implied model for Tamburlaine himself.[5] The most explicit is on the hero's entry into Babylon –

> Where Belus, Ninus, and great Alexander
> Have rode in triumph, triumphs Tamburlaine –

but it is telling that Marlowe's Tamburlaine falls ill and dies, like Alexander, in Babylon, whereas the real Tamburlaine died (in 1405) in Utrar on the River Jaxartes while leading his army to China. The figure of Alexander lies behind this Tamburlaine, not least in the play's obsession with geography: at Part I, IV.4.79–84 Tamburlaine promises to 'confute the blind geographers' and replace the 'triple division' of the T/O world map, which symbolises the cosmos as delineated by Alexander, with a modern map.

At Part I. ii.2.73 Tamburlaine asserts 'Fortune herself doth sit upon our crests', and at Part II i.2.174 he boasts:

> I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
> And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about,
> And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
> Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.

Sir William Alexander

These themes in medieval thinking about Alexander to which Shakespeare and his contemporaries were heirs – the role of Fortune in his career, his inevitable lapse into dust, his vices of tyranny and drunkenness – are also prominent in a dramatist who made Alexander the central figure in two of his plays. This is William Alexander of Menstrie, later Sir William (1567/8–1640). William Alexander is not a well-remembered name today, but in the reign of James VI and I he was one of the most prominent members of the royal court: tutor to Prince Henry and, after the latter's death, to Prince Charles, Master of Requests to King James and Secretary of State for Scotland, a principal mover in the colonisation of Nova Scotia and eventually first Earl of Stirling.[6] But his beginnings were literary: he is the author

[5] Marlowe otherwise refers to Alexander simply as a great man now buried in the tomb: *Dr Faustus* IV. ii. 42ff. – 'Alexander the Great, chief spectacle of the world's pre-eminence'. When Faust takes flight in his desire to encompass the whole world there is no echo of Alexander's similar flight in the *Alexander Romance*.

[6] For a judicious assessment of William Alexander's plays see Grogan 2014, 143–7.

of some of the first tragedies on Greek themes in English, as well as a sonnet-cycle, 'Aurora', A 'Paraenesis to Prince Henry' and an epic poem 'Doomesday', studied by John Milton. It seems to have been his poetry that first brought him to the attention of King James. According to legend, they met by chance while hunting in the Ochil Hills: William 'had already made the tour of Europe, and acquired reputation both as a scholar and a poet. He was a sprightly youth, and possessed elegant manners. The King invited him to Stirling Castle'.[7] James subsequently gave William the task of working on the translation of the Psalms for his English version of the Bible, but it has never been clear just how much of the text as we read it now is William's and how much is James' own. We first hear of him at the court in London in 1609.

His literary beginnings led to political high office. His biographer, Thomas McGrail, judges this was the result of soaring ambition and sets him alongside Walter Ralegh as one of the most influential figures of the age, even though all his projects ultimately ended in failure. Nigel Tranter, by contrast, in his novel about William, presents him as a man who longed for a quiet life in the Scottish hills, but had greatness thrust upon him by a king who could not be refused.[8] Whichever of these may be the true assessment, I concentrate here on his three 'Greek' plays – *The Tragedie of Darius*, *The Tragedie of Croesus* and *The Alexandraean Tragedie*. These were first published in 1603–5 and followed by *Julius Caesar* (1607); all were later published together as *The Monarchicke Tragedies*.

I refer to our author, perhaps over-familiarly, as William, and when I use the name 'Alexander', it refers to the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, who is a prominent character in two of the three plays.

These plays have not met with a warm critical reception. The epithet 'Senecan tragedy' has been applied to them somewhat loosely in my opinion, and the 'Seneca' tag has been used to blacken them by critics who seem to have intensely disliked what they devised a name for. McGrail regards William's plays as failures comparable to his political career. He writes of *The Alexandraean Tragedie*,

> This lengthiest of Alexander's tragedies is by very far the worst . . . It must remain one of the dreariest, dullest, most tedious, involved, and prosy attempts at the dramatic ever written in the English language. Not one of its nearly 3500 lines ever rises above the most commonplace moralising prose . . . Alexander's borrowings from several sources show one of his

7 Charles Rogers, *Traits and Stories of the Scottish People*, 273, cited in McGrail 1940, 13.

8 *Poetic Justice* (1996).

> weaknesses as a dramatist: he lacked the skill to combine, omit, concentrate, and dramatise. Consequently the narrative is chaotic and sprawling.[9]

I hope to persuade you that this judgement is wrong-headed in many ways. It was perhaps inspired by the remarks of F. L. Lucas on the plays: 'consumedly dull . . . happily scarce . . . feeble rant . . . dismal choruses on mutability . . . a seedy jackdaw masquerading in mouldy owl's feathers'.[10] Even William's excellent editors, Kastner and Charlton, compare his plays unfavourably with those of Fulke Greville for his 'commonplace moralisings' (cxci). They usefully list the characteristics of Senecan drama (clxix f.): ghosts, dreams, supernatural events, horror and gore, murder, villains of the blackest dye, sexual passion, the use of dialogue and proverbs and a 'Spanish spirit'. They state that these plays are, 'with Fulke Greville's, the most comprehensive realisation of the qualities of their class, the final crystallisation of all the tendencies of Seneca of the French school' (cxci). Even they admit that there is only one ghost in these plays. There are no dreams, though Jacques de la Taille's earlier play on Darius included one (III. vi), Darius' dream of his 'génie inhumain', which seems to be modelled on Xerxes' dream in Herodotus book 7. There is no horror and gore – none of the supernatural and portentous *monstra* that are so prevalent in Seneca – and there is no sex.[11] I don't know about the Spanish spirit. That leaves the plentiful use of *sententiae* and the tendency to make certain characters out and out villains, such as Perdiccas in *The Alexandraean Tragedie*:

> I am not scrupulous, for, I protest,
> Ov'r all, and by all meanes I'll kill my foes. (1005–6)

and Cassander in the same play

> No, since I must myself with murder staine,
> I'le by the roots raze all the royall race,
> So that no power shall spring from them againe.

In the latter case at least, a historian might concur with this portrayal. But 'Senecan', particularly if it is meant as a negative judgement, is too easy a label. For Scaliger, Seneca was 'a colossus, inferior in majesty to none of the Greeks, in culture and polish even greater than Euripides'.[12] As T. Howard-Hill has made clear, 'Senecan tragedies presented on the public stages of London . . . were in their way as aberrant representations of their

[9] McGrail 1940, 37. [10] Lucas 1922, 114. [11] Staley 2010. [12] Lucas 1922, 114.

model as the French Senecan plays that influenced [William] Alexander . . . It was Alexander's very success in emulating the French school of Senecan playwrights that is responsible for his low standing as a dramatist of the period amongst modern critics.'[13] Howard-Hill calls the plays 'tragedies of failure', which is a neat description, though to infer from it that they also represent the 'failure of tragedy' is another matter. Jane Grogan reaches a more favourable verdict, but finds them 'less intelligent' than Daniel's *Philotas*, 'records less of political engagement than of courtly fashions'.[14]

It is time to turn to the plays. *The Tragedie of Darius* (1603) is the first. It recounts the defeat of Darius III of Persia by Alexander the Great.[15] The plot and its details are all drawn from Q. Curtius Rufus' *History of Alexander the Great*, as can be easily shown by the appearance in the play of the eunuch Tyriotes (C. 4.10.25), who is unnamed in the history of Arrian and is named Tireos in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*. I have found no event in the play that is not taken from Curtius. In 1598 Jacques de la Taille's play *Daire* was published posthumously, as he had died of plague at the age of nineteen. Editors, including Kastner and Charlton, as well as the editor of Jacques de la Taille's *Alexandre*, refer to the *Daire* of de la Taille as a possible source and even suggest that William's play is a translation. Anyone who has read both plays can see instantly that this is not the case. De la Taille's play is about 1,200 lines long, William's 3,500. The outline of the plot is similar, since both men had read Curtius with care, but the characters differ and the choruses are quite different in style, length and purport. William was perhaps led to the theme by the earlier writer, but his play is his own.

The second play, *Croesus*, has no predecessor in drama that I am aware of.[16] It is based on William's own reading of Herodotus, whose account of the Lydian king Croesus in Book I has a tight structure all its own, possibly based on a now-lost Croesus romance by Xanthus of Lydia.[17] Like *Darius*, it is the drama of a king who falls from prosperity to disaster. Croesus' boast that he is the happiest of men is undermined by the Athenian sage Solon, who admonishes him that no man should be called happy until he is dead. Solon also discusses Croesus' condition with the moralist Aesop, in an

13 Howard-Hill 2001, 480–2. Whether the popularity of French Seneca was due to the influence of the Countess of Pembroke, as McGrail 1940, 203, suggests, is now rather debated.

14 Grogan 2014, 146–7.

15 Tranter, who seems not to have read the plays, thinks it is about Darius I, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire.

16 The story had been told in the *Romance of the Rose* (*c*.1237–77), 6489–6630, in John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* II. 3577–3731 and in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*, 2727–60.

17 Stoneman, 2020.

episode not found in Herodotus but based on Plutarch's *Life of Solon*. When Croesus' kingdom is conquered by Cyrus the Mede and Croesus is placed on a pyre to be burnt alive, he remembers Solon's words. Though Cyrus eventually spares Croesus, after the pyre on which he has been placed to be burned has been extinguished by a divine shower of rain, his last words in the play are

> When numbring my misfortunes all of late,
> I will looke backe upon my pleasures past,
> And by them balance my (now) haplesse state.

And the chorus repeats the refrain, 'no perfect blisse before the end', before concluding the play:

> O, it is true that Solon said!
> While as he yet doth breath extend,
> No man is blest; behold the end.

Both these plays are driven by the idea of the unpredictability of Fortune, while the pagan gods are almost entirely excluded. (There is no mention of Croesus' testing of the oracles, for example.) The word Fortune occurs countless times in the plays, but it should be noted that this is a non-Senecan Fortune. In Seneca, Fortune is always treated as an enemy, both in the philosophical works and in the tragedies, but William's is the Blind Fortune of the Middle Ages as encapsulated in John Lydgate's (1370–1450) *Fall of Princes*, based on the material Giovanni Boccaccio collected in his *de casibus virorum illustrium*.[18] Here her operation is little more than random. Not only does she cast people down simply because they have risen high, there is a suggestion that anyone who rises high is bound to display the hubris which necessarily leads to a fall. So Nigel Mortimer, in his authoritative study of the poem, refers to it as a 'narrative tragedy'.[19] Lydgate develops the argument with some subtlety at the beginning of Book III, 162–203. Speaking of the viciousness of mankind, he writes

> Cours off Fortune nor off the sterris rede
> Hyndrith nothing geyn ther felicite,
> Sithe off fre chois thei haue ful liberte.

[18] The same moral is drawn in the *Romance of the Rose*. Like Boccaccio, Lydgate has chapters on Callisthenes, Darius, Alexander of Epirus and Olympias, but not on Alexander of Macedon himself. See further Stoneman 2016.

[19] Mortimer 2006.

That is, men have free will and their destinies are not determined by Fortune.

> God punsheth synne in many maner wise;
> Summe he chastiseth for ther owne avail: . . .
> God off Fortune taketh no counsail. (187–9, 190–1, 194)

William's tragedy of Darius draws its historical narrative inspiration from Curtius, but its conception of Fortune is entirely medieval. The play begins with a monologue by Darius, who defines himself as 'in fortunes lap asleep' (line 6) and exclaims 'Blind Fortune O! thy stratagems are strange' (77), and later 'But fortunes course, what mortall can restraine, Who diadems through dust for sport doth roule?' (109–10). The chorus similarly insists that 'fatall Fortune doth attend the great' (536) and asserts

> So Alexander mighty now,
> To whom the vanquish'd world doth bow
> With all submission, homage, and respect,
> Doth flie a borrow'd flight with fortune's wings;
> Nor enters he his dangerous course to ponder;
> Yet if once Fortune bend her cloudie brow,
> All those who at his sudden successe wonder
> May gaze as much to see himselfe brought under. (581–8)

At the end of *Darius* the chorus seem to have been reading Horace:

> O happie he who farre from Fame at home,
> Securely sitting by a quiet fire,
> (Though having little) doth no more desire,
> But first himselfe, then all things doth o'ercome; . . .
> No heavy dreame doth vex him when he sleeps,
> "A guiltlesse minde the guardlesse cottage keeps. (2195–2208)[20]

The third of these plays, *The Alexandraean Tragedie*, is the most ambitious by far. It covers a period of seven years following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, and traces the rivalries of the generals who vied for control of his empire as far as the death of Eumenes in battle with Antigonus in 316 BC. It begins with a speech of 256 lines by the Ghost of Alexander, who runs over the events of his own career before heading gloomily to face the judges of the Underworld, where he anticipates the hostile testimony of Parmenio, whom he had had murdered. He

[20] Cf. Horace *Serm*. 2.6, and *carm*. 1.22, 'Integer vitae'. This poem is also quoted in *Titus Andronicus*, and Nisbet and Hubbard in their commentary on it point out that it was probably taken from Lyly's *Grammar*, a standard Latin textbook.

presents himself in a notably bad light by emphasising his murders of Clitus and Callisthenes, which were the main episodes in the treatment of Alexander in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, as well as in the Senecan moralising tradition.[21]

> Ah! Whilst (transported with a prosp'rous state)
> I toil'd to raise my throne above the starres,
> The thund'rer straight (who still doth pride abate)
> Did wound my fame with most infamous warres.
> Made I not grave Calistenes to smart,
> Who did disdaine a mortall to adore? . . .
> Ambition did so farre my thoughts engage
> That I could not abide my fathers praise,
> But (though my friend) kill'd Clitus in a rage,
> Who Philips fame durst in my presence raise. (105–20)[22]

A true Senecan ghost, this Alexander exults in the prospect of the wars his death will unleash, putting the Furies out of a job:

> The snake-tress'd sisters now shall never need
> Their fatall fire-brands, loathsome Pluto's pests,
> Nor inspirations strange whose rage doth breed
> A thirst of murther in transported breasts.
> Ambitions flames may from my ashes shine
> To burn my minions mindes with high desires. (201–4)

Those 'high desires' are the subject of the following acts, which present the complex series of events described in Diodorus Siculus' *History* books 18 and 19. The six generals debate how the empire is to be ruled following the king's sudden death; Perdiccas emerges as the victor and promptly crushes a rebellion by the Macedonian army, who have proclaimed Alexander's half-witted half-brother king. Lysimachus and Seleucus then decide to try their luck. Perdiccas becomes increasingly villainous. I quoted some of his lines earlier in this chapter; later, he says, 'we

[21] See Stoneman 2013, 'Philotas'.

[22] Perhaps William also knew Sir David Lyndsay's lines on Alexander (*Poetical Works*, ed. George Chalmers (1806), iii. 85):

> Alexander, throuch prydefull tyrannye,
> In yeiris twelf, did mak his great conquest;
> Ay scheddand saikles blude, full cruellye;
> Till he wes king of kingis, he tuke na rest,
> In all the warld, quhen he was ful possest,
> In Babilone thronit triumphandlye,
> Throuch poison strang, deceisit dulefullye.

renounce all kind of kindnesse now' (1151). He is supported by Eumenes but is murdered nevertheless; Eumenes now swears loyalty to Antigonus. Meanwhile, Alexander's mother, Olympias, and wife, Roxane, bewail their loss and put their trust first in Perdiccas and then in Eumenes. But Cassander, the son of the Macedonian regent Antipater, now comes to the fore, determined to seize power for himself. Olympias meanwhile imprisons Alexander's half-brother and his wife and then has them murdered. Lysimachus describes the scene in a fine passage:

> And when some Thracians basely bent for bloud
> (As she had charg'd) with mercenary spight,
> Had murdred Philip, and his queene imbru'd
> With these red streames that drown'd her life's delight,
> She sent to her whose soule in griefe did sinke,
> (As messengers of death to bragge her breste)
> A sword, a cord, and an empoyson'd drink,
> A tyrants presents, yet a wretches best. (2153–60)

When it comes to Olympias' turn to be murdered (by Cassander), she pours forth a four-and-a-half-page soliloquy in which she repeatedly presents herself as a victim of Fortune (who is mentioned at least seven times in the speech), and goes on to echo the chorus of *Darius*:

> O happie woman, of true pleasure sure,
> Whop in the countrey leads a guiltlesse life!
> From Fortunes reach retyr'd, obscure, secure,
> Though not a queen, yet a contented wife. (2369–72)

The chorus concludes its review of these events, 'Good hap attends but few, unto their death' (2561).

The next act consists of a discussion between Aristotle (who had been Alexander's tutor) and the Athenian statesman Phocion. This is free invention, though one assumes that background information was drawn from Plutarch's *Life of Phocion*. Aristotle is notably strong, as you might expect, on classical allusions, referring casually to the mythological Aeson, Jason's father, without explanation, and even remarking wisely that 'generation from corruption springs' (2641), which quotes the title of one of his own works, 'On generation and corruption'. Aristotle says

> I think the world is but a tennis-court,
> Where Fortune doth play states, tosse men for balls. (2577–8)

The two men go on to discuss the fall of monarchies:

> What alterations strange attend a throne,
> As if the spheare of fortune were a crowne?
> The great still toss'd like Sisyphus his stone,
> When rais'd most high, rest ready to fall downe. (2755–8)

(These lines, to my mind at least, recall those of *Richard II* (III.ii.160), 'for within the hollow crown That rounds the mortal temples of a king Death keeps his court'.)

In the final act, when Olympias and Eumenes are dead, a messenger announces the death of Olympias. In this passage alone William turns to the history of Justin, who describes how Olympias marched out in splendour to meet her murderers, a moment Diodorus ignores.

> She on two Ladies shoulders lean'd her armes,
> And with a majestie did march to death,
> Like Alexander once amid'st th'alarmes
> As if in triumph to abandon breath . . .
> As at the image of their ancient kings,
> Or then some goddesse all the soldiers gaz'd
> But (ah) some (forced by the tyrant) striv'd
> To spoile (unnaturall) Natures fairest frame,
> And twixt the' alabaster balles, they driv'd
> Th'unwilling swords that straight grew red for shame. (3298–3309)

This passage starts magnificently, but it's a pity about those alabaster balls. William is not Shakespeare, but then, who is?

Next, a Chaldean astrologer emerges to foretell the remaining events leading to the deaths of Lysimachus, Seleucus and Antigonus, and the survival of Ptolemy as king of Egypt, but most of all the triumph of Cassander, who

> Enemy to all good,
> Hath to the sceptre swim'd through seas of blood. (3350–1)

The narrative of this play is enormously ambitious. Perhaps it takes a classicist to be impressed by the control with which William has knit together this complex story (which is confusing even for a professional historian) through a series of speeches and dialogues. Though it takes the form of a play it is in effect more like an epic poem, and one may ask whether there is some influence from Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars* of 1595. Particularly notable is the way in which the five choruses are

woven into the drama, tracing a whole theory of the development of civilisation, from forebodings at the end of Act I, through an evocation of the Golden Age in Act II, the recognition in Act III that 'faith has fled the earth' and in Act IV that vice destroys human lives and the failure of self-knowledge makes men victims of Fortune. Act V concludes

> What damned furies thus toss mortalls mindes
> With such a violent desire to reigne? (3402–3)

The Virgilian account of the fall from the Golden Age gives place to an echo of Lucretius (II. i.ff.) where they sing

> We may securely sitting on the shore,
> While great men doe (as toss'd on the Ocean) grone,
> Taught by their toyles, esteeme much of our rest. (3472–4)

Then Horace returns in the final lines:

> The Cottage oft is happier than the throne;
> To thinke our own state good, and others ill;
> It could not but a great contentment give:
> There much consists in the conceit and will:
> To us all things are as we thinke them still. (3481–5)

The play is undoubtedly very long. The others are not short either. They cannot have been conceived for performance.[23] But they are the work of a notable intellectual (not to mention a highly skilled versifier). The sustaining of a theory of history through *The Alexandraean Tragedie* is a notable achievement. The plays are also highly learned, the work of a well-trained classicist. It is intriguing to inquire where William acquired his learning and his knowledge of Greek. Good editions were readily available, such as Stephanus' Herodotus. There had been an English translation of Curtius by John Brende (1584?) and of Herodotus Books I and II by B. R. (1584), as well as French translations of Plutarch and Diodorus by Jacques Amyot, from whose version Sir Thomas North made his English Plutarch (1579). It would be necessary to check for verbal parallels to be sure that William was not using translations (I have only checked one passage of North, 96–7, which is not similar in phraseology), but the quality of his education suggests that this would not have been necessary.

[23] William's first connection with the stage is hinted in some verses to the actor-manager Edward Alleyn in 1619, after his foundation of Dulwich College: McGrail 1940, 216–17.

He was educated at a school at Stirling of which the headmaster (in 1571–8) was Thomas Buchanan, nephew of the great humanist George Buchanan, who had been tutor to James VI. He went on to the University of Glasgow[24] and, according to William Drummond of Hawthornden, he underwent 'breeding at Leiden'.[25] McGrail remarks that there is no independent evidence for this, and nothing in the registers of that university, but that 'it was then common for young Scotsmen to further their education at Leiden'. He also travelled through the continent with Archibald, Seventh Earl of Argyle, returning to Britain by about 1603. If he did indeed attend Leiden, even as a guest student, he was probably there during the years when Justus Lipsius (1547–1606; at Leiden 1579–91) was lecturing on Seneca's treatises and on the Roman historians. Perhaps exposure to this great scholar gave William his interest in the possibility of plays on a Senecan model that treated themes from ancient history. However, I see no influence of Lipsius' Christian Neo-Stoicism in the plays. For Stoics it is not Fortune but Providence that rules the world.[26] The two references to Stoicism in the plays use the word *Stoic* in the modern sense, to mean 'gritting one's teeth'.[27]

There were few examples of such plays, least of all on Greek themes, before 1600. Thomas Preston's *Cambyses*, of 1584, seems to be one of the earliest. William Alabaster's *Roxana* of 1592 (which is not about Alexander's queen, but a semi-fictional Hellenistic episode from Bactrian history) lives up to the 'Senecan' tag in full:

> Doth not the utter dampe of blackest hell
> Darken the brightsome circles of my sight
> And my fresh fancie in blind error wrappe? –

it begins. Some early versions of Greek dramas include George Gascoigne's *Jocasta* of 1566, which is a translation of an Italian original (by L. Dolce) purporting to be a version of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, though it differs very greatly from its original, not least in having no choruses. The question then arises whether William might have known any Greek plays in the original. His headmaster's uncle, George Buchanan, had translated Euripides' *Medea* and *Alcestis* from Greek into Latin, so it is theoretically possible that William knew this author. One of the commendatory poems prefaced to his 'Recreations with the Muses', by a certain John Murray, refers to themes of Greek mythology

24 McGrail 1940, 6 25 Cited in McGrail 1940, 6.
26 For example Lipsius, *de Constantia* 1.14.
27 *Darius* 899: 'his passions so what Stoick could control?'; *Croesus* 1665.

Whom Sophocles, Euripides have sung,
And Aeschylus in stately tragic tune:
Yet none of all hath so divinely done,
As matchlesse Menstrie in native tongue,
Thus Darius' ghost seems glad now to be so,
Triumpht on twise by Alexanders two.[28]

William's friend William Drummond composed three such verses, of which one (first published in *Doomesday*, 1614) begins:[29]

Like Sophocles (the hearers in a trance)
With crimson cothurne, on a stately stage,
If thou march forth (where all with pomp doth glance)
To mone the monarchs of the world's first age (etc).[30]

A rather better poem prefixed to *Darius* (1603), by Walter Quin, recalls Alexander's visit to the tomb of Achilles and thus in effect compares William to Homer, so one need not take the comparison to particular authors. But it is significant that the names of these Greek authors could be brought into play. It should not be assumed that Seneca was William's only available model.

More pregnant is the question of the sources of William's ideas in these plays. The obsession with the problems, not to say inevitable doom, of kings is very striking given his political status and his role as tutor to Prince Henry. The *Paraenesis to Prince Henry* is a verse version of a 'mirror for princes', detailing qualities of the good king and invoking examples of the bad, such as Nero and the Persian kings (stanzas 20–1). Henry's Fortune is good (31) and seems unsullied by changeability. Justice is a prime virtue of kings (54 f), while violence and avarice are to be avoided (62, 65). Chastity is also praised (70):

The Macedonian Monarch was more prais'd,
Than for triumphing o're so many soils,
That of his greatest for (though beauteous seene)
He chastly entertain'd the captiv'd queene.

The final verses of this poem, to my mind, are evidence of a reading of Pindar, or at least of Horace's imitation of Pindar:

But stay, where fly'st thou (Muse) so farre astray?
And whil'st affection doth thy course command,

[28] Kastner and Charlton 1921, vol. I, ccv. [29] McGrail 1940, 193–203.
[30] Kastner and Charlton 1921, ccvi.

> Dar'st thus above thy reach attempt a way
> To court the heire of Albions war-like land. (82)

The very positive view of kingship in this poem is at odds with the universal pessimism displayed in the plays, especially *The Alexandraean Tragedie*.

The closest analogue to these plays is Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* (1604), which I have written about elsewhere.[31] In this play Alexander is a tyrant and the execution of Philotas is a judicial murder. Daniel admired William's poetry and praised it in the 'Epistle Dedicatory to the Prince'; William also admired Daniel, as we know from a letter he wrote to Drummond after Daniel's death.[32] Daniel's play was certainly problematic for the royal court, yet William's seems to have been admired. It is reasonable to bring in here the *Treatise of Monarchy* by Fulke Greville, who was a patron of Daniel. The nature and responsibilities of monarchy were a major topic of discussion at this period, evident also in the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Greville's poem, probably composed in the 1590s, is largely a positive document on the dos and don'ts of kingship; but in the section on tyrants he shows a pessimism not unlike William's:

> Hence like a ball, how hath this world bin tost
> From hand to hand, betwixt the Persians, Medes
> Romans and Greekes, each name in other lost?
> And while Romes pride her government misleades,
> To scorne the Asian, Grecian armes, and worth,
> Made slave shee was to those lords shee brought forth.
>
> What marvell is it then, to see the earth
> Thus chang'd from order unto anarchie? (84–5)

William's theory of history in the plays seems more one-sided than Greville's, and has more in common with the medieval outlook of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, in which no one can win – or for that matter Shakespeare's Plantagenet series.

In conclusion, I hope to have presented to you a poet, Sir William Alexander, who was well educated and deeply immersed in Greek (and Roman history); who had reflected on the nature of historical change and the role of human vice therein; who was perhaps most influenced by medieval ways of thinking about Fortune but who was engaged with current debates about the nature of monarchy; whose poetic model, if mainly Seneca, was Seneca minus the gore and bombast; whose strength

[31] Stoneman 2014. [32] McGrail 1940, 203.

lay in the construction of large and complex (if admittedly over-long) poetic structures, sometimes close to epic than to tragedy; whose versification is highly accomplished; and who is capable of passages of real poetry:

> The boiling ardour of the rising Sunne
> (All moisture gone) did breede so great a drouth
> That from the way I had a little runne,
> To find some fountaine to refresh my mouth;
> There, by the borders of a rising brooke,
> Which shadow'd was from Titans rising beames,
> From liquid crystals I a tribute tooke,
> Which seem'd to murmure, that I forc'd their streames:
> When (loe) I saw (a lamentable sight)
> Two wounded horses draw a bloody coach,
> Which, clad with skinnes, shew horrour at the height;
> And it to spie when as I did approach,
> One was within, who could not long time scape
> The fatall passage of th' infernall gates. (*Darius* 1771–84)

Darius' murder irrupts into this pastoral *locus amoenus* as human intervention, in the later play, brought evil into the Golden Age. Every episode re-enacts the fall of man. One sees why John Milton devoured every word of William's *Doomesday*.

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16 Alexander the Great in Opera

JON SOLOMON

Of the diverse elements that led to the creation of opera at the close of the sixteenth century, interest in ancient history was not one of them. The late Renaissance Italian scholars and artists who studied ancient Greek music theory and performance practices of ancient Greek tragedy fabricated a new style of music to perform lyric dramatisations of ancient Roman poetic adaptations of ancient Greco-Roman myths in Hellenistic pastoral settings. During the first half of the seventeenth century, as this newly configured synthesis of music and theatre spread from Florence to Mantua, Bologna, Rome, Paris and elsewhere, the subject matter almost always derived from ancient mythological literature – for example *Dafne* (1598), *Euridice* (1600), *Orfeo* (1607), *Arianna* (1608), *Aretusa* (1620), *Le nozze degli dei* (1637) and the Parisian *Orfeo* (1647) – or secondary adaptations of ancient mythology – for example *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d' Alcina* (1625), *La catena d'Adone* (1626), *Diana schernita* (1629) and *Erminia sul Giordano* (1633).

Ancient history remained in the shadows of Renaissance theatre, surfacing only occasionally in a tragedy like Giambattista Giraldi's *Cleopatra* (1543) or in minor musical works – for example the stanzas sung by Cleopatra in the *intermedi* performed during Alessandro Piccolomini's (contemporary) comedy *Alessandro* (1558), and *Dario e Alessandro* (1606), a choreographed battle written and composed by the future Mantuan duke Ferdinando Gonzaga.[1] Mythological fables would continue to provide subject matter for more than 1,000 operas throughout the seventeenth and, particularly with the inclusion of Greek tragedies, eighteenth centuries. Finally, the first opera employing a historical plot was Monteverdi's final opera, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643).[2] Focusing on Nero and court intrigue with Octavia, Poppea and Seneca, Giovanni Francesco Busenello's libretto demonstrates the impact of the current intellectual Tacitus movement.[3] But even here the librettist infused a mythological ambiance into the tale as a succession of Olympian divinities (Minerva, Mercury, Cupid, Venus, the Graces) and the principal

[1] Pirrotta and Povoledo 1982, 198; Chambers 1987, 123.
[2] Cf. Ketterer 1999; Heller 2006, 379–99; Rosand 2007, 61–18. [3] Heller 1999, 39–96.

human characters invoke the gods Jupiter, Nemesis and Astraea.[4] Important for our purpose here is the fact that Busenello asserted in his *argomento* that although the story was derived from Tacitus, he wilfully applied his artistic licence: '*Cosi rappresenta Cornelio Tacito. Ma qui si rappresenta il fatto diverso*.'[5] Although this was not a new concept, by asserting his artistic licence to change ancient history in deference to dramaturgical and theatrical considerations, Busenello led the way for the many dozens of operas that would set the historical Alexander the Great in a variety of reformulated romantic, political and ethical confrontations.

Before embarking on a more or less chronological survey of the Alexander operatic corpus, it is important to explain to classicists and historians unfamiliar with this subgenre the nature of our sources. Despite the importance of classical studies in the creation of opera and the pervasiveness of the classical tradition in several thousand works from *Dafne* to the present, there is as yet no printed or online resource listing every opera.[6] Making matters worse, different titles were sometimes substituted – for example *Alessandro nell' Indie* refitted as *Cleofide*, *Poro* or *Alexander und Porus*. In 1731 alone Handel's two resettings were named *Poro, re dell'Indie* and *Cleofide*, and Porpora's was *Poro*. Nonetheless, after working through several library shelves of music reference volumes, my expectations were sufficiently substantiated that Alexander the Great was one of the most frequently represented historical subjects in operas from the mid seventeenth century to the first two decades of the nineteenth.

In addition, not every opera produced a printed libretto, and not all of those are extant. Although many are available online, a WorldCat search for the libretto of Francesco Sbarra's *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso*, for instance, identifies only one copy housed at the British Library. The many private archives and libraries that still employ card catalogues make it that much more difficult to access and identify variations between librettos, especially when one considers that Metastasio's *Alessandro nell' Indie* was reset (and edited) at least seventy times. Applicable to many of the lesser known works is this footnote to Beth Glixon's 1998 article on *Gl'amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane*, where after thanking Thomas Walker, who told her of Tiziana Morsanuto's 1993 conference paper comparing versions of the libretto, and Lowell Lindgren, who supplied her with a copy of Morsanuto's handout, she concludes by saying, 'It should be noted that

[4] Cf. Yates 1975. [5] Heller 1999, 40.

[6] McDonald 2001, 243–338, includes a very useful 'Partial List of Operas and Demi-Operas Based on Classics, Including Historical Topics', with approximately 3,000 titles. For a survey of general sources see Marco 1984, 6–12.

there are inconsistencies in descriptions in secondary sources of various copies of the librettos of *Gl'amori di Alessandro Magno*, including a version most likely not linked to an actual performance (*La Rosane con gli amori di Alessandro Magno* [Venice, 1663]).'[7] Her final note reminds readers that the librettic texts, which are the most important sources for our survey, were susceptible to drastic emendations, excisions and interpolations by composers, performers and impresarios, not to mention alterations necessitated by the unforeseen incidents and accidents that inevitably occur in the production and performance of such a complex musical/theatrical art form.[8] Just to cite one example, Giacinto Andrea Cicognini died while writing the libretto for *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane*. He completed the *argomento*, prologue, first act and two scenes of the second, but the name of the author who completed the work is unknown. We know this only because the impresario, Giovanni Burnacini, discusses it in the 1651 Venice libretto.[9] Inconsistencies abound, and they not only affect modern scholarship, but raise spectatorship issues as well. The published librettos for *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso* (Venice 1651, Florence 1654, Bologna 1655, Milan 1659, Naples 1662) would inform patrons and audience members that the work was a '*dramma musicale*', but the 1654 Lucca and 1664 Rome librettos describe it as a '*tragicomedia musicale*', and the 1658 Munich libretto describes it as a '*comedia rappresentata in musica*'.[10] Given this incomplete state of sources, and because of the enormity of the Alexander operatic corpus, the following survey is necessarily preliminary and does not even attempt to be complete.

The Busenello/Monteverdi *L'incoronazione di Poppea* did not immediately or directly lead to Alexander's first operatic appearances. By 1645 the economic cost as well as the social and political stresses of the war with the Ottoman Empire in Crete would severely curtail operatic production in Venice, where opera had rapidly developed as a commercial – not a royal or imperial – enterprise.[11] To the point, Busenello's *La prosperità infelice di Giulio Cesare dittatore* (1646) was probably never staged.[12] Influenced by Venetian political concerns, the operatic focus moved towards the East. Maiolino Bisaccioni's quasi-historical *La Semiramide in India* (1648), placing the Babylonian/Assyrian legend in India, was followed by Cicognini's mythological *Giasone* (1649), one of the most successful operas of the century, in which Medea is the queen of Colchis. Cicognini also wrote the equally successful *Orontea* (1649), the first opera set in ancient Egypt.

[7] Glixon 1998, 454 n. 27. [8] Cf. Greeman 1968; King 2008, 181. [9] Glixon 1998, 446.
[10] Osthoff 1960, 16–18. [11] Rosand 1991, 143–53. [12] Rosand 1991, 108.

In her standard work on Venetian opera, Ellen Rosand draws a direct line between *Giasone* and Francesco Sbarra's *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso* (1651), set by Antonio Cesti, and again in 1651 this same allure of the ancient Orient led as well to Cicognini's *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane* (1651), set by Francesco Lucio.[13]

Like most mid-century Venetian operas, both of these Alexander operas have complex romantic plots, but they differ significantly in the nature of the romance, Alexander's involvement and the resolution of plot complications. In *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane* – amidst minor plots involving Bagoas, Craterus and Oristilla – Roxanne, the daughter of the Satrap Coortano, is carrying the unborn child of an unknown lover, but by the conclusion a popular token motif, in this instance a necklace, identifies Alexander as the father and the two sing of their love. By comparison, in *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso*, which Cicognini originally devised as a play, Alexander bears an unrequited love for the Persian war captive Campaspe, whom Hephestion also loves, and there are minor relationships involving Apelles and Bleso. By the end of the opera, counselled by Aristotle, Alexander 'conquers himself' by surrendering Campaspe and oversees her marriage to Apelles and that of Hephaestion to Alexander's sister Cynane (Cina). This is the first of many examples of an Alexander opera that depends on his magnanimity to resolve romantic conflicts.

Like their historical predecessors, *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane* and *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso* also included gods, goddesses and allegorical figures, but through convention, not because of Alexander's own claim to divine parentage. The prologue of *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane* is set in the destroyed temple of Diana, where the goddess urges Cupid (Amore) to force Alexander to fall in love in the presence of Bellona, who declares battle against them.[14] Cupid reappears later (1.15) along with Delight (Diletto) to enlist the assistance of Lasciviousness (Lascivia), and Bellona reappears (2.15) to chastise Lasciviousness for forcing Alexander's capitulation to love.

Employing a different set of pagan divinities, the prologue of Sbarra's *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso* presents Night (Notte), Earth (Terra) and Fame (Fama), along with Jupiter, to lavish praise on Alexander,

[13] Rosand 1991, 277–80, discusses the musical innovations of the opera.
[14] Glixon 1998, 450–1.

emphasising his military prowess. Night introduces the world asleep and awaiting the morning rise of the sun.[15]

A riportar quel giorno,
in cui la spada
del famoso Alessandro
con debellare il Perso
volse aprirsi la strada
a domar l'universo.

To bring back that day
in which the sword
of the famous Alexander,
with the eradication of the Persian,
wanted to open the way
to dominate the universe.

Then Jupiter (Giove), a greater being, assures them and the audience that Eternity will print in his great book 'with notes of diamonds (*con note di diamanti*)', that

Sarà sempre Alessandro
Glorioso, ed invitto.

Alexander will always be
glorious, and unconquered.

Fame adds:

Già superato hà il tutto:
se non crei nuovi mondi,
più da vincer non resta.

He has already overcome all:
if new worlds are not created,
none will remain to conquer.

Now Jupiter offers the prophecy that Alexander's greatest victory is yet to come, thereby giving significance to the title of the opera and creating dramatic interest for the spectators:

Giove
Cosi il fato ha promesso:
Hoggi deve Alessandro,

[15] Miller 1998, 326.

doppo haver vinto ogn'altro
per sua gloria maggior vincer se stesso.

Fama
Sarà di se maggiore.
Giove
. . .
Un'Alessandro
esser vinto non può
se non da un'Alessandro.

Jupiter
This Fate has promised:
today Alexander must,
after conquering all others,
for his greater glory conquer himself.

Fate
He will be of greater self.

Jupiter
An Alexander
cannot be conquered
except by an Alexander.

And the prologue concludes with the imprimatur of a chorus of gods singing:

Viverà.
Splenderà.
Glorioso.
Luminoso.
Chi del tutto trionfò
del temp trionfar' anco saprà.
Il nome d'Alessandro in ogni età
non morrà, nò, nò, nò.

He will live.
He will shine.
Glorious.
Luminous.
Know that he who triumphs over all
will also triumph over time.
The name of Alexander through every age
will not die, no, no, no.

Combining poetry, music and costumed machine spectacle, and continuing a Renaissance court tradition, opera had since its inception been developed as a vehicle that could lavish celestial praise on local rulers and dedicatees. Even in Venice opera was an art form that depended on aristocratic patronage. But here we see exceptional praise for Alexander despite the fact that he was neither local royalty nor a contemporary patron. He was not a venerated Italian nor even an ancient Roman, but a Greek. And this was not the same kind of praise heaped upon other ancient heroes, whether mythological like Hercules – for example *Ercole amante* (1662) – or historical like Julius Caesar (*La prosperità infelice di Giulio Cesare dittatore* (1646)).

One possible explanation for such rarefied praise may be attributed to current politics. Wolfgang Osthoff proposed several scenarios in which Alexander and the other principals in the opera represented prominent contemporaries, including matching up the onstage Apelles with Salvator Rosa.[16] As part of his argument for reading the opera this way, he points out the contemporaneity of *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane*. Approaching the question differently, Hugh Thornburn takes a historical approach by subdividing these mid-century decades.[17] The first period in the earlier 1650s included our first two Alexander operas and reflected the prideful successes of the War of Candia, when Venice successfully blockaded the Dardanelles in 1648 and 1650 and ultimately won the first naval battle in the Aegean Sea off Naxos in the summer of 1651. A second period included operas involving ancient Persian emperors – for example *Xerse* (1654), *Il Ciro* (1654) and Busenello's *La Statira, principessa di Persia* (1655). A third followed the peace negotiated in 1669 – for example *Lisimico* (1673) and *Alessandro magno in Sidone* (1679).

Robin Miller's more formalistic approach within the genre understands that presenting pagan deities in a prologue was simply a theatrical motif used regularly in the first few decades of Venetian opera primarily to create more visual spectacle. Of the forty-one Venetian works produced between 1637 and 1649, thirty-one began with a prologue.[18] In 1650, 1651 and 1652 at least sixteen operas included prologues with ancient personifications and deities.[19] Some of the gods and personifications were used repeatedly. Notte appeared in *L'Orithia* (1650) and *L'Erginda* (1651) as well as *L'Alessandro vincitor di se stesso* (1651). Bellona had already appeared in *L'Euripo* (1649), and Lascivia would reappear in *Le fortune di Rodope*

[16] Osthoff 1960, 21–30. [17] Thornburn 2006, 58. [18] Miller 1998, 205.
[19] Miller 1998, 54–5, 83 and 232–3.

e Damira (1657). Diana appeared only in *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno*, but Jupiter had already appeared in *L'Euripo* and would appear in eight operas within the next eighteen years, Fama in four. These are just a few of the twelve dozen or so characters presented in Venetian prologues, and because so many of these were pagan, librettists had a variety of choices. Common themes belonged to the tragic, comic, geographical, cultural and historical categories, and of course the presence of Amore indicated a love theme, as in *Gli amori di Alessandro Magno, e di Rossane*. In contrast, in the prologue of Giovanni Antonio Boretti's revised version, *Alessandro amante* (1667), Jupiter compels Virtue (Virtù) and Fortune (Fortuna) to cooperate to enhance the honour of Alexander.

Traditional plot formulas and frequently employed specific narrative motifs would continue to shape the characterisation of Alexander the Great as an operatic protagonist. Particularly in the commercial venues of Venice, librettists tended to design their stories around a single person – for example an historical or mythological king, queen, hero or heroine, portrayed ideally by a well-known vocalist, who was engaged in one or two dynamic romantic relationships that intersected with one or two other, equally fluid romantic relationships.[20] One narrative motif for a male protagonist featured a married ruler having a romantic affair, often with a foreign woman, that interfered with state business, albeit reuniting with his wife by the end. Aurelio Aureli applied this type of libretto to first *Claudio Cesare* (1672) and then *Alessandro magno in Sidone* (1679).[21]

The romantic triangle in Aureli's *Alessandro magno in Sidone*, set by Marcantonio Ziani, consisted of Alexander 'the Great' (Magno), the youthful, effeminate King Eumenes (*giovinetto, effeminate re*) and Thais, whose beauty and lasciviousness are repeatedly emphasised in the *argomento*, where she is also described as 'the Lady who was the most interesting and wise of her time (*Donna la più interessata e sagace che vivesse in quel tempo*)', and as a 'famous Lady, lascivious, interesting (*famosa Donna lasciva interessata*)' in the list of *personaggi*.[22] These multiple descriptions represent a strong character type that was in fashion at the time and therefore applied in contemporary Venetian opera to other ancient royal woman like Semiramis (e.g. Matteo Noris' *La Semiramide* (1670)) and Messalina (e.g. Francesco Piccioli's *Messalina* (1679)).[23] In this Alexander opera, however, after using her powerful sexuality to thrust the effeminate Eumenes aside, Thais turns to Alexander only to be rejected, in fact,

[20] On the popularity of Venetian historical operas see Bianconi and Walker 1984, 250–1.
[21] Cf. Nicolò Beregan's *Tito* (1666) and Matteo Noris' *Galieno* (1676). Glixen 1985, 18.
[22] Heller 2005, 267. [23] Heller 1993.

banished. By juxtaposing an ambitious woman like Thais with a protagonist like Alexander, elsewhere known for his military prowess and magnanimity, Aureli develops another facet of Alexander's moral character. In her study of this character type Wendy Heller describes Alexander as 'the ideal prototype of the male hero – in full possession of appropriate masculine characteristics – who can triumph over the most fascinating and seductive of women'.[24] Thais would feature again a century later in Carlo Castone/Giuseppe Sarti's *Alessandro e Timoteo* (1783).[25]

This characterisation is anticipated earlier in the opera with more familiar motifs. Alexander's introduction in Act 2 is heralded by Eusonia, wife of Eumenes and queen of Phoenician Sidon, who describes Alexander's charisma.[26]

> *Ecco Alessandro, ò Cieli.*
> *Che maestà! Che aspetto!*
> *Chi non l'adora hà un cor di bronzo in petto.*
>
> Behold here Alexander, O Heavens.
> What majesty! What countenance!
> Whoever does not adore him has in their breast a heart of bronze.

For additional emphasis, in the middle of the opera (2.3) Apollo in his capacity as the sun god appears from above the stage via machine with the four Hours, proclaiming,

> Sol'è Alessandro, ed Alessandro, è Sole.
> The Sun is Alexander, and Alexander is the Sun.

Given that the tradition in the seventeenth century had preserved an Alexander with such sublime characteristics, Aureli embellished the tradition with lines delivered by other characters on (and above) the stage. This proven technique – dating back to Homer – of having other characters praise the protagonist affected the actors singing on the operatic stage. That is, their 'motivation' was to yield, pay homage to, adore or fear Alexander in all his theatrical grandeur. This observation was advanced by Richard King in his study of Baroque theatrical gestures in several operas featuring Alexander, assuming that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century audiences were sufficiently knowledgeable about the most prominent ancient heroes to differentiate them:[27]

[24] Heller 1993, 112–13. In the *argomento* Aureli cites not Athenaeus (e.g. 13.576d–e), but Menander in Propertius (2.6).
[25] Ferrero 2009. [26] King 2008, 187. [27] King 2008, 184.

> You can act and sing Caesar, or Scipio or Alexander. . . . The problem is that these characters are not interchangeable; they are not simply emblems on the stage, symbols for any and all royalty, or at least they were not, for 18th-century audiences. Each historical figure then conjured up a host of resonances specific to that character. Scipio, for example, was not just a general, but the hero who demonstrated his greatness at least in part through his famous 'continence', often represented in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art, and re-enacted in operas such as Handel's *Scipione* (1726). This specificity was especially true of Alexander the Great, who was not *a* hero, but *the* hero – the most glorious of them all. It follows that, to perform Alexander, one must understand who he was, and allow that knowledge to guide one's performance.

Voltaire commented that history was the most popular literary genre of his period, and applying this to the acting profession, Charles Gildon, writing in the early eighteenth century, added:[28]

> As [the actor] now represents Achilles, then Aeneas, another time Hamlet, then Alexander the Great and Oedipus, he ought to know perfectly well the characters of all these heroes, the very same passions differing in the different heroes as their characters differ.

As for the audience members, King suggests that the illusion inherent in theatrical performance, enhanced by poetry, music and machine spectacle and effectively conveyed by a charismatic vocalist, portrayed Alexander the Great in a way that most of them could easily recognise, making this unique historical figure come to life.[29] Telling is the new title employed when Aureli's *Alessandro magno in Sidone* was produced again in 1683 at the Teatro di Canal Regio: *La virtù sublimate dal grande, overo Il Macedone continente*.[30]

Plutarch in particular had prepared seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe with a complex portrait of Alexander, and another of the prominent aspects of the tradition of Alexander's complex character was his capacity, despite exhibiting so much self-control up to the level of magnanimity, to become uncontrollably enraged. We see this displayed in a series of operas leading to Handel's *Alessandro* (1726), written by Paolo Antonio Rolli. Like many of the collaborative works of Rolli and Handel, the opera originated at the court of Hanover, where Ortensio Mauro's *La superbia d'Alessandro* (1690), set by Agostino Steffani, was repeated the

[28] Cf. King 1996 and 2008, 189. [29] Cf. Strohm 1985, 232–40.

[30] Nonetheless, Christian Heinrich Postel adapted Aureli's libretto as *Der Grosse Alexander in Sidon* (1688), set by Johann Philipp Förtsch.

next year as *Il zelo di Leonato* (1691), in which Lisaura, the daughter of the king of the Scythians, loves Alexander and in turn is loved by Tassile, the king of the Indians.[31] Although the exact method of access is still unknown, the scholarly consensus is that Handel and Rolli had access to copies of their Hanoverian exemplars, suggesting a lengthy continuum for this particular representation of Alexander.[32]

Performed in London, the printed libretto for the Rolli/Handel *Alessandro* is in both Italian and English. At the end of Act 2, scene 2, Alexander proclaims to Roxane in recitative:

Che onor si rende al vincitor del mondo!
Di due Donne ritrose
fatto è scherzo Alessandrò!
E quel che più m'aggrava;
barbara è l'una d'esse, e l'altra è schiava.
Son' amante, sì è ver; mà son monarcha.
Quando l'Amor volesse
lasciarli andare inulti;
non dee la maestà soffrir gl'insulti.

How much the Conq'ror of the World is honour'd!
Two cross and thankless Women treat me vilely –
And Alexander's made their Tool, their Sport!
But that, which aggravates my Shame the most,
Is that the One of them is but a Slave,
The other a Barbarian – True, I'm a Lover
But tho' a Lover, I'm a Monarch too;
And tho' unpunish'd, Love would let them go,
Yet Majesty such Wrongs can't undergo.

This introduces Alexander's aria, sung with the usual repetitions:

Vano Amore, Lusinga, Diletto,
Cedete al Dispetto
Che m'agita il Cor.
Se m'offende, vilipende
D'altera Bellezza
L'istabile Umor;
In *Odio ed asprezza*
Degenera Amor.

[31] Strohm 1985, 53–4. [32] King 1991; Timms 2002; Glixon 2016, 403–20; Roberts 2017.

Vain Love, and flatt'ring Delight,
Give Room to Rage, and Way to Spite
That actuates my Heart:
When Beauty's Pride cannot be born,
Repay her Haughtiness with Scorn,
That plays th' unconstant Part.
Love that does once degenerate,
Turns to Contempt, and soures to Hate.

Richard King describes how Handel reflected this in the music:[33]

> This aria is extraordinary in several respects: it is very long, and it has an unusual form; the B section brings a change in meter (common time), and tempo (Presto). Throughout, '*Vano amore*' is characterized by tremendous energy (e.g. the rising figures in the violins), difficult divisions, and dense counterpoint.

Growing up in Halle, Handel had a sufficient education, including Latin and Greek, to know that Alexander was greater and more complex than most operatic heroes. Of course it is impossible to reconstruct fully the weight of his knowledge of Alexander, his musical sources and individual inspiration, his collaboration with Rolli and the exigencies of staging this work. But King, especially in 'Classical History and Handel's "Alessandro"', argues that the Rolli/Handel operatic portrait of Alexander was intentionally multifaceted. To emphasise Alexander's military prowess, for instance, Handel extended the battle symphony early in the opera. At the end of the first act (1.9), honour and courage were also ascribed to Alexander, and Rolli's text here argues that the victorious military leader Alexander is deserving of romantic repose, which will all the more enable him to win greater glory. The recitative sets up the conflict between the demands of love and glory:[34]

Fra gli uomini e fra i numi
pien di vittorie e di superni onori
prender breve riposo omai conviene
nelle dolcezze di graditi amori.
Poi della gloria si ripigli il corso,
perchè mia fama e mia potenza vole,
se sia concesso, oltre i confin del sole.

Thus amongst Men, and ev'n amongst the Gods,
Loaded with Victories, and full of Honours,

[33] King 1991, 14. [34] Cf. King 1996, 48.

'Tis fitting now to take some short Repose,
And taste the fruitful Sweets of pleasing Love.
Then, then, let Glory's Course begin anew,
By which, if possible, my Fame and Pow'r
Beyond the Confines of the Sun shall tow'r.

Stating that this applies 'ev'n amongst the Gods', Alexander's own words suggest his divinity as well, but Cleitus' complaints about *proskynesis* insist that this is a false claim.[35] Alexander's ensuing curtain aria then elegantly expresses his claims to fame, courage, glory and honour:

Da un breve riposo
dì stato amoroso,
più fiero più forte
di gloria al sentiero
amante e guerriero
Il cor tornerà.
Se tutta già in guerra
mi cede la terra;
il vanto d' onore
s'io cedo all' smore,
minor non farà.

In short Fits of Love reposing,
Sweetly dreaming, gently dozing,
Warring Lovers, when they wake,
Bolder Paths of Fame will take;
Braver to their Arms will turn,
And with fiercer Glory burn,
If already in War
The whole Earth did declare
It yielded to me, – tho' I yielded to Love,
My Honour, for that, not the smaller will prove.

Given his complex characterisation, outside of Venice contemporary court circumstances sometimes dictated which aspects of Alexander a poet might feature in his libretto. *Alexanders und Roxanens Heirath* (1708), assumed to be written by Johann von Besser and set by Augustin Reinhard Stricker, was commissioned as the grand festival opera to celebrate the wedding of Frederick I of Prussia and Sophia Louise of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and so it retold the story of Alexander and his wedding to Roxanne.[36] In contrast, in his dedication to Karl Alexander, Duke of Wittenberg, for

[35] King 1991, 154. [36] Schneider 1852, 29–34.

Alessandro in Susa (1708), a lengthy five-act *tragicomedia* that concluded each act with an elaborate spectacle, Girolamo Frigimelica-Robert writes,[37]

> *I vizi de' Monarachi passati si espongono su le scene per gloria de presenti, e per documento dei venturi. Il diletto di veder rappresentati gli Eroi de prischi secoli nella parte, che mostra la loro deformita, dipinge nell ombre de contrari la perfezione di quelli, che fanno avere le loro virtu senza i lor vizi.*
>
> The vices of the past monarchs expose themselves onstage for the glory of those present, and as a remembrance for future rulers. The delight of seeing the heroes of former centuries represented in a way that shows their faults, depicts by making stark contrasts the perfection of those who have their virtues without vices.

An extreme example of a darker alternative is *The Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great* (1700/1), derived from Nathaniel Lee and set by Daniel Purcell and Gottfried (Godfrey) Finger, in which Roxanne stabs Statira before Alexander dies after being shot with a poisoned arrow in the final scene.

Five years after the Rolli/Handel *Alessandro*, Metastasio wrote his *Alessandro nell'Indie* (1729), set by Leonardo Vinci, focussing more specifically on Alexander's magnanimity, but this opera told the story of how Alexander granted forgiveness to Porus and united him with Cleophis. By featuring this non-historical partnership for Porus, Metastasio, one of the most influential poets of the eighteenth century, extends the tradition derived primarily from Quintus Curtius (8.13–14) and then Racine's historical five-act tragedy, *Alexandre le Grand* (1665). Also preceding Metastasio was Domenico David's *L'amante eroe* (1691), in which Cleophis and Porus team together against Alexander only to conclude with a description of Alexander as the celestial Jupiter on earth.[38] Generally speaking, Metastasio successfully synthesised the works of the classical French tragedians and the previous century's operatic librettists via the literary reforms of the Arcadians, particularly his teacher Gian Vincenzo Gravina. In his *argomento* David cites both Plutarch and Quintus Curtius, and usually Metastasio precedes his librettos with an accounting of his sources. But here he does not because the stories were so well known ('*la nota generosità di Alessandro il Grande verso Poro*').

As in many of his librettos, *Alessandro nell'Indie* presents a crisis caused by unrequited love, compounded by treachery, mistaken identities and the erroneous report of a death, which is resolved in the third act after

[37] Roberti 1708, 4. Cf. Ravazzolo 2009, 171. [38] Cummings 2017, 118–20.

a thwarted assassination conspiracy and a threatened suicide, with bloodless reconciliation, dignified reprieves and lovers united. This variable formula served Metastasio very well for several decades, and his thirty librettos were reset many hundreds of times and enjoyed for an entire century by hundreds of thousands of people from Madrid to Moscow. As mentioned at the outset, *Alessandro nell'Indie* was no exception, being reset at least seventy times, making it by far the most successful Alexander opera ever written.

Metastasio embellishes his operatic Alexander the Great in several ways. To provide another character for Alexander to exonerate, he creates the historically plausible character named Timagenes who has a genuine Greek name and belongs to Alexander's circle. Like the historical Philotas, he is a Macedonian officer who turns against Alexander. Indeed, Alexander is said to have killed Timagenes' father, although, unlike the assassination of the historical Parmenion, this occurred prior to Timagenes' actions in the opera (which included bearing a secret letter, another standard operatic narrative motif). Surpassing his dramatic predecessors, Metastasio summons Alexander's magnanimous spirit not once but thrice in the opera, first (2.12) when he grants amnesty to Gandarte (disguised as Porus) and Porus (disguised and renamed Asbites), then (3.3) when he pardons Timagenes for his treachery, and finally (3.10) when he not only pardons Porus and sanctions his love for Cleophis (Cleofide) but also restores their kingdoms.[39]

The recitatives help to glorify Alexander, particularly in the way his former adversaries respond to his gestures. Here is an excerpt from the Timagenes scene (3.3):

Timagenes
Dovuto è questo
mio sangue a te.

Alessandro
Ma che mi giova il sangue
d'un traditore? Ah, se mi vuoi superbo
del mio poter, rendimi il cor, ritorna
ad esser fido; e Timagene amico
mi renderla, tei giuro,
più pago di me stesso,
che Poro debellato e Dario oppresso.

[39] Markstrom 2007, 287–302.

Timagenes
Oh delitto! oh perdono!
Oh clemenza maggior de' falli miei!
Ma che resta agli dei,
Se fa tanto un mortali?

Timagenes
Because of this I owe
my blood to you.

Alessandro
But what good to me is the blood
of a traitor? Ah, if you want me to have pride
in my power, give me back my heart, restore
your faith; and give my friend Timagenes
back to me, I swear to you,
I value myself more,
than defeated Porus and subjugated Darius.

Timagenes
Oh crime! Oh pardon!
Oh clemency greater than my faults!
But what remains for the gods,
If there is such a mortal?

In the final four lines, Timagenes expresses his gratitude by claiming that Alexander's clemency is greater than his own faults and that he equates the act with an act by a divinity. But in the prior lines Alexander speaks not as a god on earth or even as a king, but as an emotionally injured human who values friendship more than power or military conquest.

The scene continues with three more lines of Alexander's recitative and then his aria, again expressing his ability to resolve 'the shameful pain of this infidelity (*la macchia vergognosa di questa infedeltà*)' with his compassion. The text of the aria – but not the recitative – is the same text Handel used for his 1736 setting with the title *Poro, Re dell'Indie*, itself a revised version of his 1731 presentation at the King's Theatre in London. The translation of the Italian poetry here was prepared for him by Charles Humphreys. (The other translations are my own.)

Sorgi; in quell pianto
già il amico vegg' io. Si bel rimorso
le tue virtù ravvivi,
vieni al sen d' Alessandro; amalo e vivi.
Serbati a grandi imprese,

e in lor rimanga ascosa
la macchia vergognosa
di questa infedeltà;
che nel sentier d' onore
se ritornar saprai,
ricompensata assai
vedrò la mia pietà.

Arise; in your lament
I already see the friend I had. If welcome remorse
has revived your virtue,
come to Alexander's breast; love him and live.
Reserve thyself for Deeds that claim
A bright Prerogative in Fame;
That thy degrading Treason's Stain
May visible no more remain.
Should'st thou, by Virtue's Motives led,
Again the Path of Honour tread,
I then shall see my Pity share
The full Reward of all my Care.

The scene was edited extensively in subsequent productions of *Alessandro nell'Indie*.[40] Metastasio himself wrote variant lines (compiled in the Hérissant edition of 1780–2) for many of the settings of his works. In the 1731 Dresden version of *Alessandro nell'Indie*, given the title *Cleofide* and set by Hasse, Michelangelo Boccardi incorporated some of Metastasio's variants and also inserted his own contributions. The climactic Timagenes scene (now 3.6) reads differently. From the moment when Alexander shows Timagenes the intercepted letter that exposes his treachery, Alexander demonstrates his magnanimity in the recitative. But in this version he turns the incident into a teaching moment, reminding Timagenes of his sin and expecting loyalty from him in the future. In this version the recitative variant belonged also to the 1736 London version translated by Humphreys.

Alessandro
Tu impalidisci, e tremi?

Timagenes
Ah Signore al tuo piè . . .

Alessandro
Sorgi. Mi basta

[40] Cf. Cummings 1982–3.

per ora il tuo rossor. Ti rassicura
del mio perdono; e conservando in mente
del fallo tuo la rimembranza amara
ad esser fido un'altra volta impara.

Alessandro
Ha! Art thou pale, and dost thou tremble too?

Timagenes
My Royal Lord, thus prostrate at your feet . . .

Alessandro
Rise, for I'm satisfy'd with thy Consusion,
And promise thee thy Pardon; and from hence,
Let the severe Remembrance of thy Crime
Teach thee to act with an unblemish'd Faith.

This passage is immediately followed by a 'simile aria', in which Alexander offers a well-known animal metaphor to develop his lesson further.[41]

Cervo al bosco che piagato
porta il fianco al prato, al monte,
va cercando l'erba e il fonte
che risani il suo dolor.
Dall'orror del suo delitto
agitato il cor traffitto
purghi in te l'atroce fallo
di vassallo traditor.

The wounded stag in the wood
carries his flank to the meadow, to the mountain;
he goes searching for grass and a spring
that will heal his pain.
Moved by the horror of its crime,
the pierced heart, disturbed,
will purge in you the atrocious error
of a vassal turned traitor.

This aria is derived from *Cervo in Bosco*, originally written by Carlo Innocenza Frugoni and set by Vinci for *Medo* (1728), an embellished retelling of the myth of Medea and Medus, to celebrate the court wedding of Duke Antonio Farnese at Parma in 1728.[42] For this important occasion

41 Markstrom 2007, 247–50.
42 '*Cervo in bosco, se lo impiaga / Dardo rapido, e mortale, / Varca il colle, cerca il fonte, / Dalla valle al prato và.*'

the coloratura aria (1.13) was sung by the celebrated soprano castrato Farinelli (Carlo Broschi).[43] In 1729 it was inserted into Leonardo Leo's (second) setting of Metastasio's *Catone in Utica* for Farinelli, now playing the role of Arbace, the prince of Numidia.[44] (It is uncertain whether Leo composed a new setting.) When Hasse took up his post in Dresden in 1730, he brought *Alessandro nell'Indie* with him for his first major presentation, revising it extensively with Boccardi. He procured the services of the skilled young alto castrato Domenico Annibali to sing the part of Alexander, and called upon Anton Hampel, the virtuoso horn soloist, to embellish the hunting horn imagery in the orchestral music that accompanies the aria.[45]

The Library of Congress [ML48 S4593] possesses the libretto for a different production of *Alessandro nell'Indie* set by Hasse, this one printed for a 1743 performance at S. Giovanni Crisostomo in Venice, and not generally included in the list of seventy resettings of Metastasio's work (and catalogued misleadingly as *Cleofide* by the Library of Congress). The librettic adaptation is anonymous but clearly different from the printed librettos for Hasse's 1736 Venice and 1741 Dresden presentations. The text of Alexander's aria at the end of the Timagenes scene (3.6) is quite different.

Sò, che un perdono amabile
oggetto è di piacer,
ma fà, che in te si destino
le imagini d'onor.
E non s'inganna a pieno
del tuo Signore il guardo,
Se d'un Vassallo in feno
cerca le vie del cor.

I know that a welcome pardon
is a pleasant matter,
but make it so that in your destiny
are the images of honour.
And the look of your Lord
is not at all deceiving you,
if it searches for the ways of the heart
in the breast of a Vassal.

This text lacks the elevated theme of Metastasio's version and even the poetic metaphor of Boccardi's adapted version. And like the celebrated *Cervo in/al bosco*, it fails to register within the broad parameters of Alexander's character spectrum. One would not associate these lines with

[43] Verga 2006, 49–50. [44] Desler 2014, 203–9. [45] Heartz 2003, 321–8.

Alexander if read (or heard) out of context. The underlying reason for this is that a number of the resettings of Metastatio's original opera refocussed the narrative to the romantic involvement of Porus and Cleophis, as the title of Hasse's 1731 Dresden version makes clear, and the new emphasis on their romance diminished the role of Alexander to a lofty administrator. Although this single example is all that can be surveyed in a short chapter, it should serve to demonstrate that the transfer of Alexander the Great onto the operatic stage was a very complex process that involved hundreds of artists over the years, and they in turn made hundreds if not thousands of minor or major variations.

Alessandro nell'Indie had an extraordinarily long life. Even the final setting, by Giovanni Pacini, now reduced to two acts by Andrea Leone Tottola, warranted seventy consecutive performances at Naples' Teatro San Carlo in 1824, and an additional production at La Scala in 1827.[46] Moreover, Metastasio wrote another libretto involving Alexander the Great and the Sidonian shepherd Amyntas, *Il re pastore* (1751), which received approximately two dozen settings, most notably those by Gluck (1756), Maria Agnesi (1756?) and Mozart (1775), stretching to the end of the eighteenth century.[47]

Because the anabasis of Alexander the Great was geographically so far-reaching and historically had remained such an integral part of the Alexander tradition, operatic librettists consequently had a broad selection of exotic locations in which to set their narratives. And because since the mid seventeenth century opera seems to have embraced such a keen interest in Orientalising locales, this is reflected in a number of different Alexander operas. In addition to Aureli's *Alessandro magno in Sidone* and Metastasio's *Alessandro nell'Indie*, there was Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti's *Alessandro in Susa* (1708), Francesco Vaneschi's *Alessandro in Persia* (1738), Pietro Ray's *Alessandro in Armozia* (1808) and Friedrich Peucer's *Alexander in Persien* (1819).

In addition, the allure of the ancient Orient inspired a number of operas with plots that featured Alexander the Great's immediate and extended family (e.g. *Rossane, imperatrice degli Assiri* (1699)), trusted generals, diadochi, their dynasties (e.g. *Eumene* (1697), *Antigono* (1745), *Olimpie* (1819)) and the kings he conquered and their extended families (e.g. *Feraspe* (1739), *Statira* (1741)). Cardinal Ottoboni's *La Statira* (1690), set by Alessandro Scarlatti, combines two romances, one between Statira and the Persian Prince Orontes (*Oronte*), the other between Alexander and

[46] Balthazar. [47] Sala Di Felice 2001, 144–51.

Campaspe.[48] When Apelles suggests that Alexander is falling in love with Campaspe, the complications mount from there, including such operatic standards as prison, mausoleum and earthquake scenes, until the conclusion of the third act, when Alexander offers to abdicate his throne in favour of Orontes and Statira. But in a novel twist at the end, it is Orontes who is magnanimous and surrenders the throne and Statira to Alexander. Apelles is also united with Campaspe, and the Olympian goddess Diana blesses both couples. *Lisimaco riamato da Alessandro* (1682), written by Giacomo Sinibaldi and revised by Aureli, set by Giovanni Legrenzi, 'reunites' Alexander with Lysimachus and Calisthenes. Then again, plot devices were so standardised that many historical operas actually needed little historicity. The protagonist of Busenello's *La Statira, principessa di Persia* (1655/6) is the daughter of Darius, king of Persia, although which King Darius is not specified, and although the role of Nicarco seems to be based on the name Nearchus and is appropriately associated with the East, he is described as a general serving Cloridaspe, the king of Arabia. Similarly, *Arsace* was the title of operas by Salvi/Sarro (1718), Gasparini (1718) and Orlandini (1722), but the name was also applied to several relevant and irrelevant operatic characters, most notably in Rossini's *Semiramide* (1823).

After the French Revolution and its harsh rejection of royalty, Alexander the Great would appear much less on the operatic stage, except, not surprisingly, for the several works created during and just after the Napoleonic era in France, including *Alexandre à Babylone* (1814), which Jean-François Le Sueur composed, apparently at the command of Napoleon, in collaboration with Pierre-Marie-François Baour-Lormian.[49] Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo prevented it from being staged. Ironically, the Alexander opera that was staged, *Alexander* (1801), '*Eine heroische, grosse heroische Oper*' by Emanuel Schikaneder and Franz Teyber, was poignantly dedicated to one of Napoleon's most formidable foes, Archduke Charles, Duke of Teschen. Thereafter, the rest of the nineteenth century and the entire twentieth produced only four obscure operas, Arthur Friedheim's *Alexander und Thais* (1904),[50] Hamilton Forrest's unperformed *Ysdra* (1925),[51] Marc-André Souchay's *Alexander in*

[48] Holmes 1985, 3–19; Smith 2018, 126–72.

[49] Mongrédien 1980, 2.765–801. Cf. Chaillou 2004, 132, and Roulin 2009.

[50] *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 101.9 (February 1905) 181–2; cf. the Hamilton/Handel choral ode, *Alexander's Feast* (1736).

[51] www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000005328?rskey=vyWkte&result=1.

Olympia (1940),[52] Friedrich Forster/Theodor Holterdorf's *Alexander* (1960)[53] and two more recent choral works, John Birtwhistle/David Blake's *The Fabulous Adventures of Alexander the Great* (1996/7) and Nicolas Astrinidis' *The Early Years of Alexander the Great* (1997), intended as a three-part opera featuring Philip, Alexander and Olympias.[54]

Like the mythological Hercules, Alexander the Great was the central heroic figure in an unusually large number of celebrated events in exotic places, and this, during the pre-democratic period in Europe, led to a proliferation of Alexander operas from the second half of the seventeenth century to the first few decades of the nineteenth, originally in Italy, but then in Vienna, England, Germany and France, making him one of the most frequently portrayed historical figures in the history of the genre. Because the ancient Alexander historians produced an abundant and colourful literary tradition, this offered opera librettists a variety of options to depict Alexander as a gloriously unvanquished or enraged king, an impassioned or magnanimous lover, a quasi-divinity or a sympathetic friend, or a variation or combination of these. Such versatility of characterisation is unique in the history of the genre, as befits the tradition of Alexander the Great. Modern historians of Alexander may find these portrayals inaccurate, but, expanding King's argument, the coordinated artistry of poetic rhythm and imagery, superior vocal skill and orchestral performance, grand costumes, *trompe l'oeil* scene painting, stage machinery and theatrical allusion were designed to elevate operatic portrayals of Alexander by some of the most illustrious celebrities of the era – like Farinelli, Senesino and Manzuoli – into a rarefied, meta-historical realm of classical reception.[55] In his preface to *Alessandro vincitor di se stesso*, one of the two earliest Alexander operas, Francesco Sbarra succinctly addressed these inherent contradictions and justified the propriety of his experiment:[56]

> *So che l'ariette cantate da Alessandro et Aristotile si stimeranno contro il decoro di personaggi sì grandi, ma so ancora ch'è improprio il recitartsi in musica non imitandosi in questa maniera il discorso naturale e togliendosi l'anima al componimento drammatico, che non deve esser altro che un'imitazione dell'azzioni umane, e pur questo difetto non solo è tolerato dal secolo corrente, ma ricevuto con applauso.*

[52] Schwandt 2007, 293–94. [53] Steyer 1960, 691.
[54] www.uymp.co.uk/composers/david-blake/works/david-blake-the-fabulous-adventures-of-alexander-the-great-30; https://openmusiclibrary.org/videos/6943/.
[55] Cf. Jackson 1967, 20, n. 2, Strohm 1997, 98–9. [56] Fabbri 1990, 142.

> I know that the pieces sung by Alessandro and Aristotle will seem to contrast with the decorum of such grand personages, but I know also that it is improper in this kind of music to sing without imitating natural discourse, thereby removing the soul from the dramatic composition, which should be nothing other than an imitation of human actions; and this contradiction is not only tolerated by the current century but received with applause.

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17 *Alexander in the Long Eighteenth Century (c.1660–1830)*

PIERRE BRIANT (TRANSLATED BY RICHARD STONEMAN)

Alexander after Droysen: And Before?

At Christmas 1833 a *History of Alexander the Great* (*Geschichte des Alexanders des Großen*) appeared in Berlin, consisting of almost 600 densely printed pages and accompanied by about 650 learned notes. The author, Johan Gustav Droysen, was an exceptionally gifted young scholar aged twenty-five. Two years previously he had defended his thesis on Lagid Egypt, and had been the pupil, at the University of Berlin, of distinguished teachers, in the areas of *Altertumswissenschaft* (August Boeckh), historical geography (Carl Ritter) and philosophy of history (Georg Wilhelm Hegel). This *Alexander* was followed in 1836 and 1843 by two other volumes devoted to what we today call the Hellenistic world (*Hellenismus*). Although in the meantime Droysen had turned his attention to the modern and contemporary history of Prussia, these three volumes were reissued in 1877 as a *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. The *Alexander* of 1833 appeared in revised form as volume I. The fame of the work was augmented by its translation into French in 1883 (*Histoire de l'hellénisme*).[1]

This is not the place to investigate the stages and the vicissitudes of Droysen's reception among historians of antiquity.[2] Despite the sometimes disagreeable reviews that appeared from the pen of German philologists, Droysen's Alexander has become a point of reference, particularly since 1877. Another German historian, Ulrich Wilcken, played a very important role in establishing the scientific reputation of Droysen, whose thesis he republished in 1894 with an extremely eulogistic commentary. In his own *Alexander der Große* (1931, vii) he spoke of Droysen's book as a 'work of genius' and the basis of all future study of the question. Two years later, the centenary of Droysen's *Alexander* was marked by a series of publishing initiatives in Germany and Europe, and by the publication of the famous study of W. W. Tarn, who located himself in the tradition of Droysen.

[1] The bibliography on Droysen is considerable, but does not need to be cited at this point. See Briant 2016, 367–80 and the selective bibliography at pages 625–6, notes 6–7.

[2] See Rebenich 2012.

Despite the scholarly offensives mounted against Droysen and Tarn in the second part of the twentieth century, inspired by a historiographical trend represented in particular by Ernst Badian and Brian Bosworth, the periodic republications and the recent translations of *Alexander* into Brazilian Portuguese (2010) and into English (2012) show that, while strongly contested, the book of 1833 is still regarded as a pioneering publication.[3] In his *Introduction to Alexander Studies* included in the 1967 reissue of the English translation of Wilcken, Eugene Borza opened his historical summary with this phrase:

> It may be said that modern scholarship began in 1833 with the initial publication of a biography by Johan Gustav Droysen. Droysen was a product of a nineteenth-century school of German historiography which has developed the principles of modern critical historical method. (1967, xii)

This had the effect of making Droysen the inspired founder of contemporary Alexander history, and of implicitly but clearly postulating, without the need for demonstration, that before Droysen no researches or reflections on Alexander had existed worthy of the name. This postulate had the very damaging consequence of essentially blocking all research on 'Alexander before Droysen'.

Warnings had, however, been uttered independently by Elias Bickerman in 1944–5 (p. 382) and then by Arnaldo Momigliano a few years later (1952). In the course of a review article dedicated to the *Social and Economic History of the Ancient World* by Michael Rostovtzeff (1941), Bickerman, on the strength of his stated knowledge of the epoch of the Enlightenment, made the English deists and Voltaire the real creators of the idea developed by Droysen, according to which Hellenism had prepared the way for Christianity.[4] As for Momigliano, without denying the inspired quality of Droysen, he underlined, in rejection of his earlier opinion but without reference to Bickerman, that the novelties attributed to Droysen had been introduced long before him, that the issue at stake was the political discussions born of comparisons between the Macedon of Philip and the Prussia of Frederick the Great,[5] and that as far as the identification of a specific historical period situated between Alexander and Augustus

[3] On these two historians and their offensives against the theses of Droysen and Tarn, see Briant 2016, 398–414, 470–6.

[4] See Briant 2012a, 505–8; 2017a, 299–301; 2015, 23–4.

[5] See Briant 2012a, 267–70; 2017a, 120–3; 2012b; 2012d.

was concerned, the historian John Gillies (1747–1836), he affirmed, was the unrecognised pioneer of this idea.[6]

These observations had no echo. Bickerman's article had appeared in a journal (*Renaissance*) which had an ephemeral existence (between 1943 and 1945) and a very limited circulation. As for Momigliano's warning, it came in the course of his *Inaugural Lecture*, which he had devoted to a synthetic and succinctly expressed reflection on the historiography of ancient Greece between the eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth. Neither author ever returned in detail to these problems. The postulate of Droysen *protos heuretes* thus continued to hold sway, all the more since Droysen himself had been very discreet about his sources of inspiration: he simply observed later, in his course on methodology, that Montesquieu's method of historical exposition was remarkable, but he never established a link of any kind between his *Alexander* and the work of his predecessors.

The break with this *opinio communis* came in the first decade of the twenty-first century, under the impulse of two sectors of research, one devoted to the political history of the eighteenth century,[7] and the other to the history and historiography of Alexander.[8] It is apparent today that in reality the men of the Enlightenment, in France, Scotland and England, but also in Germany, manifested a considerable interest in Alexander and his historical achievement, and that they devoted chapters and fundamental works to these problems, in a manner that, in a broad sense, looks forward

[6] Momigliano 1952, 5–7: 'Though Droysen's penetrating vision of the Hellenistic age as an age of transition between Paganism and Christianity cannot be compared with Gillies' limited political interest, it is undeniable that he had a predecessor in this respect too.'

[7] See in particular Volpilhac-Auger 2002, which, entirely devoted to Montesquieu's analysis of the conquests of Alexander, opens with the following sentence: 'The person of Alexander constitutes for the thought of Montesquieu, as for the philosophy of the Enlightenment, a major focus of reflection; . . . he is less a conqueror than a perfect administrator.' See also Larrère 2002: 'We are in the presence of a veritable subversion of heroic and military virtues vis-à-vis those of commerce: thus from the bosom of Antiquity there arises an exemplary figure of Modernity' (324).

[8] See my course at the College of France, offered since 2002/3, a summary of which may be found on the website of the College of France (www.college-de-france.fr/site/P.-briant/resumes.htm). I treated this problem for the first time in public in a conference paper presented at the Celtic Conference in Classics at Rennes on 1 September 2004, on the following theme: 'Hellenistic Historiography, Achaemenid History and Alexander History, or: From Arrian to Droysen via Montesquieu' (unpublished). Since then I have frequently touched on the question in numerous articles and especially in a 2012 book (*Alexandre des Lumières*), now translated into English (*The First European*, 2017) with cuts (pages 31–172 of the French edition are summarised on pages 17–67 of the American edition, pages 203–34 on pages 95–104, and pages 283–323 on pages 168–84). In the rest of this chapter I refer systematically to the French edition and to the corresponding pages of the American edition where they do correspond.

to and prefigures the very positive image Droysen developed later. It is to the general analysis of this historiographical current that my contribution is dedicated; it covers the whole of the 'long eighteenth century', which encompasses both the second half of the seventeenth century and the first third of the nineteenth.[9]

A New Image of Alexander: The Macedonian Conquest and the History of Trade

Because of the permanence of the images which from antiquity to the present day have circulated and continue to circulate in the form of apparently indestructible commonplaces, it is tricky to date precisely the vicissitudes of the dominant conception regarding the sense to be given to the Macedonian conquest. However, there can scarcely be any doubt that, even if the author was not aware of it, the *History of Commerce and of Navigation in the Ancient World* (*Histoire du commerce et de la navigation des Anciens*), which appeared in Paris in 1716 under the name of P.-Daniel Huet, played a considerable role in the changing of the paradigm.

Covering the period from before the Flood to the end of antiquity, the book includes a chapter (XVII) devoted to Alexander, positioned between the 'longue durée' of trade 'before Alexander' (chapters XV–XVI) and 'after Alexander' (chapters XVIII–XX). Throughout the book are numerous references and allusions to the Macedonian conquest. These developments are closely articulated in two chapters (XI–XII) devoted to the trade of the Persians, where Alexander is similarly a constant presence. Chapter XVII, introduced by a development on 'the changes caused to commerce by the conquests of Alexander', opens with the following declaration:

> Things were in this state when Alexander attacked the empire of the Persians and, by the conquests he achieved, changed, so to speak, the face of the world, making a great revolution in matters of trade. One must regard this conquest, and principally the capture of Tyre and the foundation of Alexandria, as a new epoch in trade. The change occasioned in the government of states, and in the interests of peoples, by opening new ports and new passages, caused a new turn in the conduct of exchange.

Among the especially notable decisions of Alexander, Huet places successively the ruin of Tyre, the foundation of Alexandria, the opening of the

[9] See my explanations in Briant 2012a, 26–30; 2017a, 13–16.

Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea (*la mer des Indes*) to trade, and his plans for the conquest of Arabia. The opening of a route to the Indies, emphasised throughout the work, was achieved, according to Huet, after Alexander 'destroyed all the cataracts that the Persians, less gifted in matters maritime, had constructed at the mouth and along the length of the Euphrates, to prevent the arrival of foreigners in their country', so effectively that his fleets, 'after leaving the Indus, re-entered the Euphrates'. This incapacity of the Persians to dominate the sea and both river and sea navigation had already been presented to his readers by Huet in chapters XI–XI, where he explained that 'in destroying the cataracts, Alexander re-established the freedom of navigation on these rivers'. For all these reasons, Alexander's conquest brought profound ruptures in the history of communications and commerce, and, as Huet says, 'he changed, so to speak, the face of the world, and made a great revolution in the history of trade'.

A great scholar in a world of scholars, a figure honoured at the court of Louis XIV, a holder of prestigious civil and ecclesiastical titles, Huet never showed any particular interest in the history of Alexander. If he threw himself against his inclination into this history of trade, it was in obedience to a command of Colbert, to whom the work is dedicated. In the context of the creation of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales, Colbert was keen to understand the experience of the ancients and to seek inspiration from it. This explains the preponderant position Huet accorded to the Indian trade, and hence the singular emphasis laid on the happy consequences of the expedition of Alexander. The report was delivered to Colbert in the autumn of 1667, and remained unpublished until 1716, when Huet, now very aged, judged it right to publish it. (Louis XIV had died the previous year.) In the meantime, he had made use of it in 1691 in another work (*De la situation de la paradis terrestre*),[10] in which he did not fail (chapter VI) to refer to the cataracts erected by the Persians 'in various places on the Tigris and the Euphrates' and to the decision of Alexander who 'restored (the rivers) to their natural state, so that vessels could again sail up them'. From this first report of Huet to Colbert right up to the twenty-first century, discussion of the implications of the destruction of the cataracts was destined to play a central role in Alexander historiography and, more particularly, in the debate over the continuities/ruptures between Darius and Alexander: the destruction of the 'barrages' built by the Persians across the Babylonian rivers was indeed regarded as the finest illustration of the incapacity of the

[10] Translated into English in 1694 (*Treatise of the Situation of the Paradise*, London, J. Capton).

Great Kings to develop their empire, and of the beneficent influence of progress coming from Europe.[11]

In a century fascinated by the history of trade and the wealth of India, Huet's book enjoyed a prodigious success: besides four French editions, the book circulated throughout Europe, thanks to translations into English (1717), Dutch (1722), Italian (1737), German (1763 and 1775) and Spanish (1793). This circulation can be explained in large part by the contemporary echoes the book evoked; very significantly, the English translation (1717) was dedicated 'to the Honourable . . . Chairman, . . . the Deputy-Chairman and to the other Directors of the East-India Company'. In these conditions Huet's theses regarding Alexander were repeated in all the books and dictionaries, including those by authors who did not have words enough to condemn the excesses of Alexander. Such is the case of Charles Rollin in his *Histoire Ancienne* (1730–7).[12] In the part of his work devoted to trade (Book XXXXIV), Rollin took a position inspired directly by Huet, since he expresses the opinion that 'the capture of Tyre by Alexander the Great, and the foundation of Alexandria, which followed soon after, caused a great revolution in commercial affairs'.[13] This influence of Huet may be traced in the exegete Robert Lawth[14] and also in the historian John Gast,[15] neither of whom can be suspected of sympathy for the conqueror.

The Alexander of the *Esprit des Lois* and Its Circulation in Enlightenment Europe

In addition to the international success of the *Histoire du commerce*, the French philosophers of the Enlightenment imposed a new image in which the theses of Huet played their part while being incorporated into an infinitely more coherent vision. Huet was known to Voltaire, who since 1736 had not ceased to extol the positive consequences of the Macedonian

[11] See my exhaustive study in Briant 2006–8; partial English translation in Briant 2017b, chapter 28: 'The Katarraktes of the Tigris: Trade and Shipping in Babylonia from Darius to Alexander'.

[12] *Histoire ancienne des Egyptiens, des Carthaginois, des Assyriens, des Mèdes et des Perses, des Macédoniens, des Grecs*, I–XIII, Paris, chez Estienne, 1731–8 = *Histoire ancienne*, in *Oeuvres complètes de –, nouvelle édition* [*by*] *M. Letronne*, T.5 (*Histoire de Philippe*, pp. 366–484); T.6 (*Histoire d'Alexandre*, pp. 5–379), Paris, F. Didot, 1821.

[13] These developments were translated into English in a special monograph: C. Rollin, *The History of Arts and Sciences of the Ancients*, I–IV, London, 1737–9.

[14] *Isaiah. A New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological and Explanatory*, 2nd edition. London: J. Dodsley and T. Cadell, 1779: 201ff.

[15] *The History of Greece from the Accession of Alexander of Macedon till Its Final Subjection to the Roman Power, in Eight Books, I–II*. Basil [London]: 1782, 136, n. 44.

conquest on the progress of commerce, and who in his *Essai sur les Moeurs* (chapter LXXXVIII) repeats Huet's thesis almost word for word, stating that 'Alexander changed the face of the commerce of Asia, Europe and Africa, in which Alexandria became the universal emporium'.[16] Over a period of forty years (1736–76) Voltaire repeated the same formulae in a rather repetitive manner, and was imitated in this regard by the curious Linguet, author of a *History of the Century of Alexander* who, despite two successive editions (1762, 1769), did not obtain the audience the author had hoped for.[17]

It is Montesquieu above all who was responsible for the positive image of Alexander that spread across Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. In fact, in the *Esprit des Lois*, the 1748 edition of which was improved and completed in the second (posthumous) edition of 1757, Montesquieu reserved a special position for Alexander in two contexts: that of the conquest (Book X) and that of the history of commerce (Book XXI).[18] In the course of Book X ('On Laws in Their Relation with Offensive Force'), Montesquieu investigates the right of conquest and the relations conquerors can establish with conquered peoples. In this context he opposes Charles XII of Sweden (chapter 13) to Alexander (chapter 14). Basing his discussion on Arrian, he underlines the wisdom of Alexander's strategy and furthermore praises his clear policy with regard to the Persians:

> He thought only of uniting the two nations and wiping out the distinctions between the conquerors and the vanquished. . . . He sought to unite the two peoples. . . . He left to the vanquished peoples not only their mores but also their civil laws and often the kings and governors he had found there. . . . He respected the old traditions.[19]

He even undertook to create collaborative ties with the Persians, based on intermarriages, for 'nothing strengthens a conquest more than unions by marriage between two peoples'. He left the conquered peoples their cults and temples (he rebuilt those the Persians had destroyed), except among peoples whose customs were considered intolerable: 'The Bactrians had

[16] On the Alexander of Voltaire see Briant 2012a, 105–9, 239–45, 255–7; 2017a, 37–9; see also Briant 2012b.

[17] See Briant 2012a: 112–14 and *passim*; 2017: 38–41.

[18] See Volpilhac-Auger 2002; Briant 2012a, 110–12, 245–55, 279–82, 330–57, and the bibliography cited in 2017a, 104–12, 135, 147, 164; see also Briant 2016, 352–63.

[19] The translations from the *Esprit des Lois* are taken from A. M. Coller, B. C. Miller and H. S. Stoner, eds. *Montesquieu. The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought). Cambridge University Press, 1989.

their elders eaten by large dogs; Alexander forbade them to do this, and this was a triumph he gained over superstition' (X. 5). In this, Alexander is certainly a man of the Enlightenment who spreads the resources of civilisation in his wake.

The policy of Alexander is the opposite of that of the Romans: the latter 'conquered all to destroy all; he wanted to preserve all, and in every country he entered, his first ideas, his first designs, were always to do something to increase its prosperity and power'. Montesquieu could not conceal Alexander's bad actions (the sack of Persepolis and the murder of Cletus), but, like Arrian, he absolves the king because of his public repentance.

Alexander again takes a central place in Book XXI, in which Montesquieu reconstructs a veritable history of commerce.[20] After discussing commerce in ancient Asia (XXI.6) and among the Greeks (XXI.7), Montesquieu devotes a chapter to Alexander (XXI.8: 'Alexander: His Conquests'), followed by another devoted to the commerce of the Greek kings after Alexander (XXI.9). Montesquieu, who had read and made use of Huet, opens chapter 8 with a declaration that seems to have been copied from Huet's *Histoire du commerce at de la navigation des Anciens*:

> Four events occurred under Alexander that produced a great revolution in commerce: the capture of Tyre, the conquest of Egypt, that of India, and the discovery of the sea to the south of that country.

To be sure, Montesquieu is able to distinguish his views from those of Huet (he rejects the thesis according to which Alexandria achieved a central position as early as the reign of Alexander), but he follows in the footsteps of his predecessor when he opposes Alexander to the Persians.[21] It is true that Montesquieu refers directly to ancient sources Huet had already employed.[22] He too regards the destruction of the cataracts built across the rivers of Babylon as an indispensable stage in the application of the large-scale strategy of the conqueror: 'One cannot doubt that his design was to engage in commerce with the Indies through Babylon and the Persian Gulf.' The navigation of his fleets, in fact, resulted in a considerable increase in knowledge in comparison with the epoch of Darius the Great. It was also the beginning of internal transformation for the primitive peoples of the borders of the Persian Gulf, the Ichthyophagi. 'He prohibited them from

[20] 'On Laws in Their Relation to Commerce, Considered in the Revolutions It Has Had in the World'.

[21] As regards Montesquieu's reading of Huet, his reading notes have survived and are now accessible (Briant 2017c).

[22] Chapter 8 of Book XXI (1757) is punctuated by fifteen very precise footnotes.

living on fish; he wanted the shores of this sea to be inhabited by civilized nations.'

One cannot insist too strongly on the real revolution Montesquieu thus created in the general appreciation of Alexander: instead of being, as in a line of thought that began with the ancients (Seneca, Juvenal, Lucan, Orosius, etc.), a cruel, bloody conqueror, his mind darkened by his own power and his desire to be equal to the gods, Montesquieu's Alexander exhibits all the qualities of the intelligent conqueror who knows how to manage his subjects, whose laws and customs he respects and who spreads, peace, harmony and prosperity everywhere. In contrast to the Spanish and the Romans, whom Montesquieu condemns, Alexander's conquest seems to represent a kind of model from which the European powers could derive inspiration.

This is the image that came to be received in Scotland and in England, where philosophers, historians and geographers were to introduce the figure of Alexander on a grand scale, emphasising particularly his conquest of India.[23] The Scottish philosopher-historian William Robertson (1721–93), an eminent representative of the University of Edinburgh and of the Scottish church, had since 1755 expressed his admiration for Peter the Great, 'a benefactor to mankind', for his crimes, which were undeniable, were necessary to effectively carry out his civilising projects. Based in part on his reading of Voltaire and Montesquieu, and inspired equally by his particular interest in the history of geographical discoveries and in the past and present history of India, his admiration for Alexander was no less. In Book I of his *History of America* (1777), Robertson salutes Alexander's work as a discoverer, situated in the longue durée of the history of European expansion. Alexander even becomes the protagonist of the *Historical Disquisition* which the author devoted in 1791 to the history and customs of India and to the effects of European colonisation on the maintenance or disappearance of local traditions.[24] Here, Alexander is presented as the promoter of harmony between peoples. What is more, supporting his view with the *De Fortuna Alexandri* of Plutarch, Robertson contests the views of those in Great Britain who set out to combat the 'superstitions' of the Indians and impose Christianity and British laws.[25]

[23] Briant 2012a, 175–95, 262–6, 386–410; 2017a, 69–86, 193–212; also see Briant 2005.

[24] *Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge Which the Ancients Had of India and the Progress of Trade with the Country, prior to the Discovery of the Passage to It by the Cape of Good Hope, with an Appendix on the Civil Policy, the Laws and Judicial Proceedings, the Arts, the Sciences, and Religious Institutions of the Indians* [1791]. London: Basil, 1792.

[25] Briant 2012a, 410–20; 2017a, 212–20.

On Robertson's death, the office of Historiographer Royal for Scotland was entrusted to the historian John Gillies (1747–1836). A specialist in ancient Greece, the author was already well known through his publications on Aristotle and on the Attic orators, but also through his *History of Ancient Greece* (1786), chapters XXXVII–XXXIX of which were devoted to Alexander.[26] Gillies positioned himself openly in the tradition of favourable judgements on Alexander already expressed by Voltaire and Montesquieu (p. 674 n. 49). Exactly like Montesquieu, he judges Alexander's plans of conquest 'judicious' and argues he chose the best solutions to ensure his domination over the lands of the Great King: in fact, he was moved 'by just views of policy, rather than the madness of ambition' (p. 636). Like Montesquieu and Robertson, Gillies underlines the importance of the initiatives Alexander took to develop circulation by river and by sea, and to develop commercial relations between the Mediterranean and India. He too likes to return to the *De fortuna Alexandri* of Plutarch in order to illustrate the civilising activity of the conqueror.[27] In brief, Gillies' chapters represent a long eulogy of the conqueror-king, as expressed in this judgement: 'Such was the life of this extraordinary man, whose genius might have changed and improved the state of the Ancient world' – if, at least, a man of his temper had been able to succeed him (p. 678). At bottom, Alexander is an Enlightened Prince, such as the author described three years later (1789) in his comparison of Philip II and Frederick the Great. When he devotes himself to the works of peace, the Prince dedicates himself 'to found cities, to build harbours, to drain marshes, to improve waste lands, to plant them with new colonies'.[28]

In 1807 John Gillies developed his views in a substantial and pioneering work, *The History of the World*, which examined world history between Alexander and Augustus.[29] A very long section of volume I (*Preliminary Survey of Alexander's Conquest* (pp. 1–202) analysed in detail the conditions under which Alexander took his measures to develop conquests,

[26] *The History of Ancient Greece, Its Colonies and Conquests, from the Earliest Accounts till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East, Including the History of Literature, Philosophy and the Fine Arts*. London: A. Strahan, I–II, 1786.

[27] On the recurrent utilisation of this opusculum of Plutarch since the Renaissance see Briant 2016, 217–26.

[28] *A View of the Reign of Frederick II of Prussia, with a Parallel between That Prince and Philip II of Macedon*. London: 1789, 31.

[29] *The History of the World from the Reign of Alexander to That of Augustus, Comprehending the Latter Ages of Greece, and the History of the Greek Kingdoms in Asia and Africa, from Their Foundation to Their Destruction, with a Preliminary Survey of Alexander's Conquests, and an Estimate of His Plans for Their Consolidation and Improvements, I–II*. London: Strahan, 1808; III, Philadelphia-Boston-Petersburg: Hopkins and Earle, 1809.

situating them in the longue durée of the Asiatic empires. Though limited by the state of knowledge at his time, Gillies' book proves at least that in this field too he anticipated Droysen, as Arnaldo Momigliano emphasised in his *Inaugural Lecture* (1952).[30] Even more than Droysen in 1833–6, Gillies was justified in proclaiming in 1807 that before him, the period from Alexander to Augustus 'was nothing but a sort of blank in history'. Just as Droysen was to do, Gillies set out to replace the period of Alexander at the heart of universal history up to the fall of Constantinople, for, in his opinion, the positive effects of the Macedonian conquest were visible and perceptible up until the Arab conquest – 'which reduced to barbarism the most beautiful regions of the earth'. Gillies gave a further proof of the modernity of his project by judging it necessary that the historian should investigate the conquered peoples as well, rather than interesting himself exclusively in the actions of the conquerors (pp. vii–viii). It is in the context of a discourse conventional at the time (the irremediable decadence of Darius' empire) that the author attributes to Alexander grandiose plans for economic and commercial development. He gave back to Asia its prosperity, which had been reduced to non-existence by 'the ignorance, barbarism, tyranny and superstitious abhorrence of the sea and a seafaring life' of the Great Kings of Persia (p. 198). In his concluding remarks, the author states that, unfortunately, the magnificent efforts of the great conqueror were ruined by 'the growing dishonesty of the Greeks, the proud tyranny of the Romans, the barbarous despotism of the Parthians and all succeeding Asiatic dynasties' (III, 483).

The combined interest in the history of Alexander and the history of India is no less evident in William Vincent (1730–1815), author in 1897 of a big book on Nearchus.[31] A second edition appeared in 1807, augmented by *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, edited and translated by the author. Alongside the detailed reconstruction of the voyage of Nearchus between the Indus and the interior of the Persian Gulf, the author presented his views of Alexander in his 'Preliminary Disquisitions' (p. 1–65), but also, in a sort of conclusion, in 'Sequel to the *Voyage of Nearchus*' (pp. 459–87).[32]

[30] 'Gillies performed a feat for which nobody has yet given him credit. He was the first to write *in extenso* the history of the Graeco-Roman world from the death of Alexander to the reign of Augustus' (p. 6). On Gillies see Briant 2012a, 181–6, 267–70; 2017a, 73–7, 120–3; 2016, 374–7.

[31] *The Voyage of Nearchus from the Indus to the Euphrates, collected from the original Journal preserved by Arrian and illustrated by authorities ancient and modern, containing an account of the first navigation attempted by Europeans in the Indian Ocean*, London, Cadell and Davies, 1797, in-4o.

[32] See Briant 2012a: 190–5; 386–92 (2017a: 81–6; 193–9); see also the studies collected by D. Marcotte (2013), in particular (on Vincent) p. 15–20 (Briant) and 77–90 (Bucciantini); in addition, the recent book by V. Bucciantini (2015).

As had been done by the geographer James Rennel,[33] one of the sources acknowledged by Vincent (pp. 21–2), the latter, in his *Preface*, addressed his warm thanks 'to the liberal spirit of the East India Company, to the Presidency of Bombay, to the ability of officers employed upon service . . . ', thus marking the relation between the Alexandrine past and the present of an India exploited by the East India Company. In a consistent manner, Vincent in fact underlines the reality of modern echoes of the expedition of Nearchus as part of the longue durée:

> It is the first event of general importance to mankind, in the history of navigation, [which illustrates] the comprehensive genius of Alexander in the conception and the design. . . . It opened a communication between Europe and the most distant countries in Asia, so, at a later period, was it the source and origin of the Portuguese discoveries, the foundation of the greatest system ever introduced in the world, and, consequently, *the primary cause, however remote, of the British establishments in India*. (pp. 1–2; italics PB)

An assiduous reader of Montesquieu and Robertson (he had also read Voltaire, whom he liked to criticise), Vincent offers a very positive image of Alexander, which he justifies also by recourse to Arrian, whose work he knew particularly well:

> Alexander never plundered a single province that submitted, he raised no contributions by extortion. . . . His conquests were attended with no oppression of the people, no violation of the temples, no insult to religion. . . . No revolt of consequence occurred. . . . In planning the voyage of Nearchus, it was not merely the vanity of executing what had never been attempted, but it was a system founded on a presumption of the advantages to be derived from it, a desire of knowing the coast as well as the interior of his empire, and a reasonable hope of uniting the whole by mutual communication and reciprocal interests. (pp. 5, 17–18)

Vincent's work met with immense success among European historians via an impressive number of extremely favourable reviews. Witness to this are the (abortive) plans for a German translation, and still more the French translation which appeared in 1800.[34] The translator, 'citizen Billecocq',

[33] On the interest taken by Rennel in the sources for the history of Alexander in India, see Briant 2012a: 186–90 (2017a: 77–81).

[34] *Le voyage de Néarque, des bouches de l'Indus jusqu'au l'Euphrate ou Journal de l'expédition de la flotte d'Alexandre, rédigé sur le Journal original de Néarque conserve par Arrien, à l'aide des éclaircissements puisés dans les écrits et relations des auteurs, géographes ou voyageurs, tant anciens que modernes, et contenant l'histoire de la première navigation que les Européens aient tentée dans la mer des Indes, traduit de l'Anglois par J.B.L.J. Billecocq, a lawyer*. Paris: Imprimerie

does not hide the fact that the heavy financial investment agreed by the Republic had political reasons as well: in fact, it was probably 'a means for us to combat successfully the most implacable of our enemies, and to appropriate for ourselves the most precious of their national riches'. We are indeed at the peak of the ferocious struggle between France and England, to the point that a friend of Vincent claimed to be convinced that the order to translate the work had come directly from Bonaparte.[35] However that may be, the diffusion of Vincent's book illustrates above all the renewed interest among the European powers in commerce and exchange. To recall the words of a reviewer of the French version, Alexander was the first to have the idea 'of bringing Europe to share in the felicities of Asia; of causing the riches of the Indian Ocean to flow towards the Mediterranean; . . . of penetrating, by navigation, to the very sources of oriental wealth'.[36]

Debates and Polemics

The influence of Montesquieu and Voltaire, but also the diffusion of the works of the British historian-philosophers throughout Europe, contributed powerfully to a broad acceptance of the image of Alexander as a civilising conqueror anxious to establish harmonious relations with the conquered, even a constructive collaboration with the Persians. Vincent, for example, congratulates himself that 'the researches of modern historians and geographers have taught us to consider Alexander neither as a hero of chivalry on the one hand, nor as a destroying ravager on the other' (p. 4): in other words, Vincent refused both the modern versions of the *Romance of Alexander* ('chivalry') and the inverse image that had had wide currency since antiquity ('destroying ravager').

Nonetheless, this undeniable success should not conceal the opposition which developed against this new paradigm. The image of Alexander remained marked by the moral condemnation pronounced by Rollin in his *Histoire Ancienne*[37] and by a whole current that designated 'history the teacher of life', which taught that Alexander's faults and vices excluded him

de la République, Year VIII [1800]. On Vincent see Briant 2012a, 394–8, 439–47; 2017a, 199–203, 242–8.

35 One should not exaggerate the devotion of Napoleon Bonaparte to the figure of Alexander; his chief model was Trajan (Briant 2012a, 318–23, 447–9; 2016: 81–92).

36 S. J. Bourlet de Vauxcelles, *Paris dans l'année 1801*. London: 1801, 121–216 (121).

37 See in particular Livre XV.xix (*Quel jugement on doit porter sur Alexandre*).

from the category of 'good king' attentive above all to the well-being of his people.[38]

Montesquieu's pronouncements were soon torn to pieces by the Abbé Bonnot de Mably (1709–85), who, as a member of the circle of the Ancients against the Moderns, polemicised against the Alexander of Montesquieu in two editions of his *Observations sur les Grecs* (1749, 190–202; 1766, 213–29),[39] published soon after the successive editions of *L'Esprit des Lois* (1748; 1757).[40] Firmly convinced of the irremediable decadence of the Persian empire on the one hand and the dazzling genius of Philip II on the other, Mably does not believe that Alexander was actuated by reason; on the contrary, the conqueror broke with the project of his father ('to affirm his authority over Greece') and threw himself into an adventure destined for failure ('he thought only of turning everything upside down, with no wish to establish anything'). Without naming his adversary, Mably systematically cites and contradicts Montesquieu positions: 'What of his conquests, whose sole object is to ravage the earth? . . . He leaves behind him nothing but ruins. . . . he is nothing but a madman whom men cannot but hate.'

Likewise, opposing himself again to Montesquieu (and Plutarch), Mably condemns the adoption of Persian customs and pronounces a verdict without appeal: 'Nothing points to . . . the views of a founder of a lasting monarchy; his Memoirs contain nothing but the projects of a vain man who wishes to astonish people, of an ambitious man who cannot leave off conquering.'[41] To be sure, 'he built cities and established Greek colonies, . . . but he thought of them as nothing but monuments to his own glory'. In brief, Alexander has nothing of the legislator who looks to the future: he is a conqueror of the worst kind. One of the most vigorous adversaries of the Alexander of Montesquieu was the Baron de Sainte-Croix (1771–1810), who in 1772 had been awarded the prize of the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, and who had published a much improved version of his dissertation in 1775.[42] It was the first essay devoted specifically to the relative value of the ancient literary sources. While respectfully acknowledging Montesquieu, whom he refers to several

[38] See Briant 2003; 2012a, 203–33.

[39] The second edition was translated into English in 1776 (*Observations on the Greeks from the French of the Abbé de Mably*), but this translation is incomplete; it is advisable therefore to consult the original French versions.

[40] On Mably's attacks on Alexander and Montesquieu see my special study, Briant 2005/6.

[41] In other words, the 'Last Plans'.

[42] *Examen critique des historiens d'Alexandre*, 1st edition, Paris 1775; 2nd edition, Paris 1804. On the Alexander of Sainte-Croix see Briant 2012a, 125–72; 2017a, 50–67; 2016, 364–7, and the biographical essay of Montecalvo 2014.

times as 'the illustrious writer', he expresses certain reservations about his Alexander. He does not hesitate to attribute to Alexander the murder of a number of his friends and a taste for Oriental ostentation and vices. He is equally and vigorously critical of his Persian policy, referring explicitly to Mably in the text. On one occasion he nonetheless demonstrates an almost Voltairean 'philosophic' spirit – namely when he discusses the historicity of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. This earned him heavy criticism in the review of the English edition of 1793, which William Vincent published in the *British Critique* of the same year: Sainte-Croix was here accused of being a partisan of the school of Voltaire, and thus of the French Revolution and its excesses. The accusation was excessive and lost all touch with reality some years later, when, in a considerably expanded second edition of his work (1804), Sainte-Croix countered by defending the trustworthiness of Flavius Josephus' text about the reception of Alexander in Jerusalem. He showed himself an equally vigorous opponent of the theses of Montesquieu.

In the meantime (1778–1804) the theses developed in *L'Esprit des Lois* had been broadly taken up by a series of Scottish and English authors, who have been discussed earlier in this chapter. That is the reason Sainte-Croix does not content himself with reiterating his condemnations of the cruelty of the conqueror, of his love of luxury and of his intemperance. He opposes with equal vigour the image of an Alexander who opened commercial routes to India, which had been taken up and virtually established by Robertson, Gillies and now Vincent: 'to attribute to Alexander, in this actual insanity, grand views on commerce – is that not to give the lie to history?'[43] Pessimistic or realistic about the relations established, from antiquity to the present day, between European conquerors and local populations, Sainte-Croix makes himself the spokesman of the 'good savages' who, in his opinion, have everything to lose from contact with Europeans: they risk the loss of their very identity, still more in the face of a conqueror like Alexander, whose death, in Sainte-Croix's opinion, marked a 'moment of rest for the human race'.

Many explanations may be advanced for the persistence of the influence of the Bossuet/Rollin/Mably/Sainte-Croix current in France, but also in many other European countries, in particular Germany (see later in this chapter). First of all, there is the fact that the authors continued to put forward contradictory opinions, which could not but arouse doubts and criticisms. If they greeted Alexander's positive achievements in the

[43] See Briant 2012a, 421–30; 2017a, 227–36.

organisation of civilisation and commerce, they at the same time maintained their condemnatory views of the type of the hero-conqueror. To take but one example, in his *Pensées* Montesquieu praises the opening of routes between the Orient and the Mediterranean (no. 1714), but he does not hesitate to denounce in general 'the hero', meaning Alexander himself, for 'his vanity and his folly in wishing to make himself adored'; he opposes his 'vainglory' to the 'real' glory of Epaminondas (nos. 575, 810, 1523). It was not easy to fight for peace and against universal monarchy, and to praise at the same time a conqueror, even a civilising one. In these conditions, the eulogies addressed to Alexander made the Macedonian king into an exceptional case in the category of conquerors, but a fragile one. One indication of this may be found in hesitations of Chevalier de Jaucourt, one of the most prolific contributors to the *Encyclopédie*: while making Alexander an example for the kings of his time, because of his role in the development of commerce (article 'Etranger', 1756), he did not hesitate in addition to assimilate his conquests to a gigantic enterprise of brigandage (article 'Conquête', 1753). A faithful reader and admirer of Montesquieu, Jaucourt had not forgotten the question posed in *L'Esprit des Lois* (XXI.8) on the relations between conquest and commerce: 'Must one conquer a country in order to trade with it?' Jaucourt was stymied by the contradiction, which Montesquieu had been able to overcome by asserting an intimate and necessary link between the extension of commerce and the establishment of peace.[44]

At the same time, many philosophers openly took sides against colonial conquest. There was, for example, the abbé Raynal and his *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux-Indes*, the second edition of which appeared in 1780. Diderot, who wrote the chapters bearing on India, condemns the enterprise of Alexander and reserves his praise for the Indian Sandrocottus, 'liberator of his country', who, in conquering the Macedonians, 'reunited the whole of Hindustan under his laws'. In the logic of a discourse which one could describe as proto-postcolonial, Alexander could not retain the glory in which his modern admirers had clothed him.

A third reason was also in play – namely the learned uncertainties expressed in the definition of the katarraktes and the role Alexander played in the affair.[45] The publication of the *Voyage en Arabie et dans les pays circonvoisins* by Carsten Niebuhr (in German, 1774–8; in French, 1780) set

[44] On this point and Montesquieu's response see Briant 2012a, 348–50; 2017a, 150–1.

[45] See Briant 2006, 41–56; 2012a, 366–71; 2017a, 164–8.

the certainties tottering. Niebuhr indeed proposed seeing the cataracts the Persians had constructed not as defence barrages but as irrigation works. In his *Voyage of Nearchus* of 1797 Vincent, though he was lost in admiration of Alexander's hydraulic works in Babylonia, had to recognise with regret that 'the demolition is as derogatory from the policy and sagacity of the monarch as it is flattering to his intrepidity' (p. 464). A number of analysts adopted the interpretation offered by Niebuhr's parenthetical remark, while others (William Mitford, John Gillies) judged it improbable that Alexander should have taken decisions contrary to his consistent policy of improvement of irrigation and navigation. So – let us stress this once more – the uncertainty was the more troublesome inasmuch as it bore on the central and decisive element of the demonstration.

One can easily understand that certain authors may have been divided. An example is Jullien du Ruet who, convinced of Alexander's positive role ('the Napoleon of the ancient world') in the development of commerce, but yet an admirer of Bossuet, of Mably and of Sainte-Croix, had regretfully to recognise that the place of commerce in the first is very limited, and that the attacks of Sainte-Croix on Vincent were without foundation.[46] Another witness is P. J. B. Chaussard, author in 1802 of an annotated translation of Arrian's *Anabasis*. Convinced of the sound basis of the criticisms of Bossuet and Rollin directed at the vices of Alexander, and an admirer of Sainte-Croix, he rejects the civilising role of Alexander. But, in contrast to Sainte-Croix, he directs his praises at those modern enterprises that, in his words, had as their aim 'to ally to conquest both the happiness and the amelioration of the destinies of the human species' – as opposed to an Alexander who was a destroyer and pillager.[47]

A School Case: German Historians and Philosophers on Alexander

In this context Germany presents a particularly illuminating case. Even if it was in German that the only monograph devoted to Alexander in the course of the eighteenth century was published, German philosophers

[46] D. Jullien du Ruet, *Tableau chronologique et moral de l'histoire universelle du commerce des Anciens, ou aperçus politiques de l'histoire ancienne rapportée au commerce, pour en démontrer l'origine, l'utilité et l'influence, dès les premiers âges du monde jusqu'à la naissance de la monarchie française*. Paris: 1809. Briant 2012a, 446–8.

[47] P. J. B. Chaussard, *Histoire des expeditions d'Alexandre rédigée sur les mémoires de Ptolémée et d'Aristobule ses lieutenants, par Flave Arrien de Nicomédie, surnommé le Nouveau Xénophon, consul et general romain, disciple d'Epictète*. Paris: An XI [1802]; Briant 2012a, 433–5.

and historians remained for a long time very hostile to the figure of Alexander, whom they regarded as the antique culmination of the hero drenched in the blood of his victims.[48] His history is introduced into Greek histories, into universal histories and even into works of philosophical reflection. One thinks for example of the book of Thomas Abbt on merit (*Vom Verdienste*, 1765), in which the relation established between the 'hotheads' of Sweden and Macedonia leaves no doubt of the condemnation meted out equally to Alexander and to Charles XII. In their manuals of universal history, published respectively in 1761 and 1788, C. Gatterer and C. Beck likewise denounce the crazy ambition of Alexander, his cruelty and his other vices, which make him comparable to a highwayman.[49] It is just the same with Herder in his *Ideas on the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784–91), and more particularly in the course of Book XII, where he discusses the empires of the East. Adopting the theory shared by many of the decadence of the Persian empire since the disappearance of Cyrus (except for a re-establishment under Darius the Great), Herder considers that the policy of Alexander was also a dead end, like 'all those states that, born of a sudden, impetuous and extensive conquest, rested solely on the genius of the conqueror'. Alexander was thus incapable of giving unity to such a diverse empire, to the extent that, in the image of the Persian empire that he had just conquered, 'Alexander, in the midst of his victories, raised up the edifice of his empire on a mound of clay.' The figure of Alexander is no better treated in the 'History of Navigation among the Principal Peoples of Antiquity' by J. I. Berghaus (1792). Though he had read Montesquieu, he rather followed Mably, considering that, having done 'as much evil as good', Alexander must be condemned with the epithet of 'scourge of humanity'.[50]

It is good to pause on the position taken on this point by one of the most celebrated German historians of antiquity – namely Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812). Professor at the University of Gottingen since 1763, director of a journal celebrated throughout Europe (*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*), he was led in 1805 to pronounce a formal statement, at the moment when he published a very favourable review of the work of the Baron de Sainte-Croix (1804). The publication of the statement was

[48] I. A. Fessler, *Alexander der Eroberer*. Berlin: 1797. One should also note John Williams, *The Life and Actions of Alexander the Great*. London: 1829.

[49] See in particular Laudin 1995; on the German Alexanders see Briant 2012a, 455–81; 2017a, 259–80.

[50] *Geschichte des Schiffahrtskunde bey den vornehmsten Völker des Alterthums, I–II*. Leipzig: 1792, I, p. 549.

accompanied by a long dissertation in Latin (*On Alexander and His Plans to Establish Communications between All the Parts of the Universe*). Before this, Heyne had intervened on the subject in the form of reviews, in which he had already shown considerable reserve regarding the positive image of Alexander that had become current in France, Scotland and England. On the model of Sainte-Croix, Heyne opposed the theory that made of war a midwife of progress. It is nothing of the sort! Far from wishing to unite the people of his empire with mutual ties, Alexander destroyed magnificent cities, in particular Tyre, and the consequences of his conquests were disastrous, marked above all by his pillaging of the Persian treasure, which was not used to improve the lot of the populace.

However, at the same time, the new ideas penetrated into Germany, at first by way of translations. The *Disquisition* of W. Robertson was translated into German in 1792 by Georg Forster, one of Heyne's sons-in-law. Heyne's other son-in-law was none other than Arnold Heeren (1760–1842), professor at Gottingen, who devoted himself to research on commerce in antiquity. An admirer of Montesquieu and Robertson, he published in 1797 a review of Vincent's *Voyage of Nearchus*, the theses of which were in accord with the results of his own ongoing researches. From his point of view, indeed, Alexander was a re-constructor and a genius, as a result of which he contested Sainte-Croix's views. He laid out his theses in detail in Volume I of his *Ideen*, one edition of which (*Historical Researches*) was translated into English in 1830.[51] He also published his views in a compact form in a manual of ancient history which was itself focussed on the joint questions of commerce and colonisation.[52] It contains a eulogy of Alexander in the following terms:

> The reign of Alexander the Great, in the eyes of the historical inquirer, derives its great interest, not only from the extent, but from the permanence of the revolution which he effected in the world. To appreciate properly the character of this prince, who died just as he was about to carry his mighty projects into execution, is no easy task; but it is totally repugnant to common sense to suppose that the pupil of Aristotle was

[51] *Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity, Translated from the German, I-II*. Oxford: Talboys, 1833. The first German edition is dated 1793.

[52] *Handbuch der Geschichte des Alterthums, mit besondere Rücksicht auf ihre Verfassungen, ihren Handel und ihre Colonien*. The first edition appeared in 1793 and was followed by numerous others. There are several French editions (third edition 1836). The English edition of 1854 was based on the sixth German edition, and appeared under the title *A Manual of Ancient History Particularly with Regard to the Constitutions, the Commerce and the Colonies*. London: H. Bohn.

> nothing more than a wild and reckless conqueror, unguided by any plan. (*Manual*, p. 178)

Despite the permanence of the reservations expressed about the faults and personal vices of the king, the vision of Heeren was fundamentally comparable to that which had already been proposed by Montesquieu and developed by W. Robertson, J. Gillies and W. Vincent. Heeren also broke with the image that had become established in Germany throughout the eighteenth century. A little later, in 1826, Fr. Schlosser, in his *Universal History of Antiquity*, took a similar position. While recognising the value of the work of Sainte-Croix, whose findings he uses systematically, Schlosser develops a vision opposed to that of his illustrious French colleague. He praises a conqueror who 'personally directed the administration of his vast empire, and carried out works designed to restore their ancient splendour to Assyria and Babylonia, and to make communication by river and canal more active than ever'.[53]

Thus, in a score of years, the general tone of German historiography of Alexander was profoundly modified. Far from the moral condemnations pronounced by the historians and philosophers of the second part of the eighteenth century, Heeren in particular, followed by Schlosser, imposed a positive vision deriving from their own work under the influence of Montesquieu and the British historians. Reservations had not altogether disappeared, but they are relegated to a secondary position, overlaid by the admiration given to the constructive work of Alexander, in particular the opening of new communications and the hydraulic works in Babylonia.

Europe and Alexander vis-à-vis the Despotic Orient

The emergence of an image of Alexander as conqueror-civiliser in the course of the long eighteenth century is indissociable from the affirmation of Europe as opposed to despotic Asia. In 1646, in the dedication to the Duke of Enghien that appears at the head of his translation of Arrian's *Wars of Alexander*, Perrot d'Ablancourt expressed the desire that 'Europe in turmoil should put its arms in the hands of a new Alexander, to rescue it a second time from the Tyrant of Asia who menaces its liberty. These are the prayers of all of Christendom.' The hope expressed by Perrot reminds us that the theme of the opposition of Orient and Occident had a long

[53] See *Universalhistorische Uebersicht der Geschichte der alten Welt und ihre Cultur*. Erst Theil, 3e Abtheilung. Frankfurt: 1827, 221–44 ('Alexander im Verhältniß zu seiner Zeit').

genealogy, since Marathon and Salamis. In the Byzantine period the frequent appeal made to Alexander as a model of resistance to attacks coming from the East goes side by side with an ever more systematic assimilation between the Ottoman foe and the Persians of antiquity. It was much the same in medieval Europe in the literature of the Crusades, in which, this time Christianised or endowed with Christian virtues, Alexander becomes the ideal precedent for a hoped-for conquest of the Holy Land and of the Muslims.

There is eloquent testimony to this in the opinion formulated since 1767 with great assurance by Johann Christoph Gatterer, which we have already encountered: with the conquests of Alexander, he writes, 'the seat of world domination passed for the first time to Europe'; a few years later (1787), he returned to the subject in almost the same words: 'In this way, . . . world domination (*Weltherrschaft*) passed for the first time from Asiatics into the hands of Europeans.'[54] Most evidently, Gatterer thus situates Alexander in the longue durée of the conflict between Europe and the Orient, the prehistory of which Herodotus had introduced at the beginning of his *Inquiries*. Gatterer's formula recurs in almost identical form in the lectures given by Barthold Georg Niebuhr at the University of Bonn in 1829–30: 'He was the first to lead Europeans to victory in the Orient. The role of Asia had reached its term, and it was destined to be reduced to servitude.'[55] At almost the same date, a third German historian, Arnold Heeren, sees in the victories of Alexander a prefiguration of the hoped-for victory of Europe over the Ottomans.[56] Heeren's opinion is all the more interesting because it comes at the conclusion of a long analysis of the state of the Persian empire up to the arrival of Alexander, which he assimilates to the state of the Ottoman empire of his time – 'a similar empire', he writes. He has just explained in detail the reasons for what he presents as 'the internal decomposition of the Persian empire'.[57] One finds here explanatory elements borrowed from the last chapter of the *Cyropaideia*. To this are added the discussions, so active in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of 'Asiatic despotism', which allow the author to consider the despotisms of the past (the Persian empire) and those of the present (the Ottoman

[54] Gatterer, 'Vom historischen Plan und der darauf sich gründenden Zusammenfügung der Erzählungen', *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek* I, 1767, pp. 15–89 (p. 47); Gatterer, *Weltgeschichte in ihrem ganzen Umfange*, Zw. Theil: *Von Cyrus bis zu und mit Völkerwanderung.* Erstes Stück: *Perser und Griechen*, Göttingen (1787): 84.

[55] *Vorträge über alte Geschichte an der Universität zu Bonn gehalten* II (1848): 418.

[56] *Historical Researches* I (1833): 356.

[57] On the theme of 'Persian decadence' in the eighteenth century see Briant 2010b; 2012a, 529–41; 2017a, 318–28.

empire) as homogeneous. In regard to the first, what is decisive in his diagnosis are the defeats the Persians suffered at the hands of the Greeks, Alexander in particular. This discourse on Persian decadence, developed during the long eighteenth century, is one of the constitutive elements of a discourse on the grandeur and superiority of Greek and therefore of European civilisation. This is the postulate Bossuet had expressed in 1681: 'To understand what had been lost by the Persian monarchy, it is only necessary to compare the Persians and the successors of Cyrus with the Greeks and their generals, above all with Alexander.' It is the same representation as one finds in all the authors, historians and philosophers, convinced that 'at the first blow struck against this colossus, it was toppled' (Rollin). It is in this sense that the conquest of Alexander acquired such importance in the European imagination. As Gatterer said in 1767, Alexander was the first European leader to have passed beyond the border with Asia and to have made the Orient a dependency of Europe. He is thus an unsurpassable model for Europeans launched on the conquest of the Orient, so much the more because, far from being simply a conqueror, he was a civiliser, coming to bring to the Orient the benefits of European civilisation.

This assimilation between the Great Kings of antiquity and modern sultans explains also why the image of Alexander was deployed in Greece against the Turks. Known since the Byzantine and post-Byzantine eras through the various versions of the *Alexander Romance*, the historical person was placed at the centre of the discourse about identity by a Greek of the Enlightenment, Rhigas Velestinlis. Convinced that the moment had come to revolt against Turkish domination (*Tourkokratia*), in 1797 Rhigas prepared propaganda material directed at his compatriots. The Austrian authorities arrested Rhigas and seized his materials. Among them were, in particular, several hundred printed copies of a small poster, in the centre of which appears a portrait of Alexander, surrounded by portraits of four of his successors and by drawings representing the paintings of Le Brun. In the accompanying text, bilingual in Greek and French, Rhigas claimed to be addressing all Philhellenes by presenting to them as a model the man who 'was recognised as the greatest of the Greeks, the whole of whose might he directed against the Persians' and who also founded important cities which still exist (a formula inherited from Voltaire). Thus one may see that, in the era of the Enlightenment, the history of Alexander became a constitutive part of what later came to be called the Eastern Question.[58]

[58] See Briant 2012a, 521–9; 2017a, 311–18; 2016, 115–63, 163–71.

Far from contenting themselves with denouncing the bloody and vain character of the conquest of the Orient, historians, geographers and philosophers of the Enlightenment century accorded an importance to Alexander that is never denied. It is absolutely clear that it was then that those problematics were first made explicit that have for a long time been supposed to have their origin with Droysen. Certain debates very active in this milieu were relaunched on the same basis in the course of the twentieth century, but without an explicit connection to the historiography of the Enlightenment, which had fallen into deep obscurity.[59] The most spectacular example is that of the discussions about the significance of the 'destruction of the cataracts'.[60] But several other elements could be cited – for example the discussion of Alexander's Iranian policy and its effects and consequences, or even the question as to whether one should define the historical role of Alexander as positive or negative (though this leads into a dead-end) etc.[61] As in antiquity, or in our contemporary world, the figure of Alexander was closely integrated into the history of the present (the long eighteenth century), which itself was characterised by the expansion of the European powers towards the Orient. This is as much as to say that, despite the silence of the author on the genesis of his reflections, Droysen knew well how to profit from the reflections of the generations of historians, geographers and philosophers who had preceded him. This remark does not invalidate the value of the enormous labour of the Prussian historian, but, by replacing it in the intellectual and political context that gives it meaning, it gives it its proper weight and balance.[62]

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59 See for example Spawforth 2015, xxix (in conclusion of a review of Briant 2012a): 'For the [historian of Alexander], it is salutary to reflect that almost all the chief debates today about how to write the history of Alexander turn out to have already been identified in the pre-Droysen era.'

60 See Briant 2008; 2010a, 90–2; 2016, 250–5.

61 Briant 2016, 437–503.

62 In his remarkable book (1968), which Anglophone historians too often ignore, B. Bravo analysed well the insights of the Enlightenment from which Droysen benefitted, but without placing the question of the history of Alexander at this period at the centre of the discussion (except in passing; see for example pp. 134–5).

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18 Images of Alexander in Germany

Hero, Explorer of New Spaces, Cosmopolitanist and Champion of the West

JOSEF WIESEHÖFER

Dedicated to Pierre Briant eminent scholar and friend, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday

The Image of Alexander in German Medieval Literature

Lord, I dreamed
that to see Alexander's battle
I flew all the way to
Munich. . . .
A twice-honed sword
divided the sky
from the earth, an effulgence flowed
into space, and the destination
of my excursion, the vision
of Altdorfer, opened up.
Far more than one hundred thousand,
so the inscriptions proclaim,
number the dead over whom
the battle surges for the salvation
of the Occident in the rays
of the setting sun. This is
the moment when destiny turns.
At the centre of the grandiose thronging
of banners and flags, lances and
pikes and batons, the breast-plated
bodies of human beings and animals,
Alexander, the Western world's
hero, on his white horse,
and before him in flight
towards the sickle moon
Darius, stark terror
visible in his face. As fortunate
did the clever chaplain, who
had hung up an oleograph

of the battle scene beside
the blackboard, describe the outcome
of this affair. It was,
he said, a demonstration
of the necessary destruction of all
the hordes coming up from the East,
and thus a contribution to the history
of salvation. Since then I have
read in another teacher's writings
that we have death in front of us
rather like a picture of Alexander's battle
on our schoolroom wall.
Now I know, as with a crane's eye
one surveys his far-flung realm,
a truly Asiatic spectacle,
and slowly learns, from the tininess
of the figures and the incomprehensible
beauty of nature that vaults over them,
to see that side of life that
one could not see before. We look
over the battle and, glancing
from north to south, we see
a camp with white Persian
tents lying in the evening glow
and a city on the shore.
Outside, with swollen sails
the ships make headway, and
the shadows already graze
the cypresses, and beyond them
Egypt's mainland extends.
The Nile Delta can be made out,
the Sinai Peninsula, the Red Sea
and, still farther in the distance,
towering up in the dwindling light,
the mountain ranges,
snow-covered and ice-bound,
of the strange, unexplored,
African continent.

(W. G. Sebald, Nach der Natur. Ein Elementargedicht,
Frankfurt 1995, 96–9; translated by Michael Hamburger,
After Nature, Penguin 2003, 109–13)

The 'German' preoccupation with Alexander begins, if you will, with the 'Song of Alexander' ('Alexanderlied') by the priest ('Pfaffe') Lamprecht, an epic that around 1155 transferred from an Old French model (Albéric de Pisançon) into Middle High German, for the first time made non-biblical, antique pagan material the subject of discussion. This first large-scale narrative of the German language with a secular theme, which is not very demanding in literary terms but significant in its choice of subject matter and model, has been handed down in various adaptations in which the figure of Alexander is evaluated in very different ways. In the oldest version (the manuscript from *Vorau*) Alexander functions as a tool in the plan of salvation of the Christian God, but is characterised relatively negatively; in the younger *Strasbourg* manuscript he appears as an outstanding warrior, but then also as a self-overestimating world explorer, who finally – as a repentant sinner – turns into an ideal ruler.[1]

Lamprecht's critic Rudolf of Ems, on the other hand, presents a completely different protagonist in his unfinished verse epic 'Alexander'. This work developed in two creative phases and was based on different sources – the first one (before *c.*1235) on an edition of the 'Historia de preliis' and the second one (probably *c.*1240–54) on the 'Gesta Alexandri Magni' of Quintus Curtius Rufus and numerous other Latin sources. It begins with the conception, birth and education of the extraordinary hero, then describes in detail the conquest of the Persian empire and breaks off before Alexander's fight against the Indian king Porus; thus, it does not contain the Oriental journeys and border-crossing adventures of the Hellenistic *Alexander Romance*.[2] The author, who claims to offer the sum of the knowledge of Alexander, in reality draws the ideal picture of a knightly prince who at the same time carries out the punishment of the heathen as an instrument of God, as a kind of Proto-Christ (M. Schnyder).[3] The epic has also been attributed 'a subliminal problematisation' (E. Lienert) of Alexander's role, and this circumstance has not least been instanced to explain the success of the work as the most important Alexander novel of the Middle Ages in German.[4]

1 For the work see Lienert 2001 and 2007.

2 Edition: Junk 1928/9 (repr. 1970). General work: Gollwitzer-Oh 2013.

3 www.sfb-episteme.de/Listen_Read_Watch/berichte/workshop_b02_erzaehlungen-von-alexander/index.html (accessed 22 April 2019).

4 In April 2018 the DFG project 'Rudolf von Ems, "Alexander"' was launched under the direction of Elisabeth Lienert. The project is preparing a commented new edition (with translation) of this Middle High German antique novel (http://dgfs2019.uni-bremen.de/germanistik/fachgebiete/mediaevistik/projekte.aspx; (accessed 22 April 2019)).

Finally, the 'Alexandreis' by Ulrich of Etzenbach (Prague, *c*.1285) should be mentioned, which counts more than 30,000 verses.[5] In it the 'cultural translation' of ancient conditions into patterns of social order and literary genre of Central European courtly culture (*Höfisierung*) is carried out even more consistently than with Rudolf of Ems. However, the religious dimension recedes, as the episode of the gryphon flight makes clear, in which not divine intervention, which sets a limit to royal hubris, forces the ruler to return, but the exhaustion of the birds (R. Schlechtweg-Jahn).[6] In the late Middle Ages prose novels about Alexander were also written, of which that of Johannes Hartlieb, the personal physician of Duke Albrecht III of Bavaria (around 1450), achieved the greatest distribution. Its source is a Latin Alexander novel based mainly on the 'Historia de preliis' and the epitome from Iulius Valerius' 'Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis', but also on other texts. The novel – characterised in the preface as a Mirror of Princes (*Fürstenspiegel*), a work containing many pieces through which 'a prince is able to hear, see and attain great noble virtue and manliness' ('ain fürst groß adelich tugent und manhait hören sehen und auch erlangen mag') – obviously combined knowledge transfer and entertainment in such a way that it became the most popular Medieval Alexander novel in the German language with eighteen preserved manuscripts and eighteen printed editions between 1473 and 1670. In the case of Hartlieb, critical historiography, here in the person of Johannes Turmair (Aventinus), for the first time in German history criticises a novelistic historical narrative.[7]

In 1529 Albrecht Altdorfer created one of the most important works of German painting. The Regensburg artist, who until then had distinguished himself primarily as a landscape painter, had been commissioned by the Bavarian duke Wilhelm IV to depict the battle between Alexander III and the Persian king Darius III in the Battle of Issus for the Munich Residenz as part of a cycle of antique battle paintings. In 1800 French revolutionary troops plundered the Munich collection of paintings and took seventy selected artworks, including *Battle of Alexander* (*Alexanderschlacht*), with them to France. In 1815, after the end of Napoleonic rule, however, the painting returned to the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. Today, it no longer has its original size because it was trimmed all around. In addition, the German text was painted over in the writing box in the seventeenth century and translated into Latin. The battle is supposed to have the effect of a

5 Edition: Toischer 1888 (repr. 1974); general work: Zacher 2009.

6 www.sfb-episteme.de/Listen_Read_Watch/berichte/workshop_b02_erzaehlungen-von-alexander/index.html (accessed 22 April 2019).

7 Edition: Benz 1924; Pawis 1991. General works: Buntz 1973, 35–7; Fürbeth 1992, 141–9.

natural process or a cosmic conflict because this world-historical event was understood as the victory of the Greek Occident over the Persian Orient. The crescent-shaped moon is the same as in the flag of the Turks who in 1529 stood before Vienna. Altdorfer thus conjures up the victory of the Occident (the sun) over the Orient (the moon) in view of the Turkish danger. One of the sources for the painter might have been the world chronicle of Hartmann Schedel, with which most numbers agree. The book was published in 1493 in Nuremberg, thirty-five years before the artist began painting *Battle of Alexander*.[8]

In the fifteenth century, starting from Italy, the Greek sources of the Alexander story gradually became known again in Western Europe, first in Latin translation, later in the Greek original and vernacular translations. Not least with the help of the Greek Alexander historians, it was possible to rediscover the 'historical' Alexander who nevertheless is still a controversial figure today because of the character of the ancient tradition and the modern views of history (see later in this chapter).

The Beginnings of German Alexander Historiography

It has often been stressed that, as far as the history of judgements on Alexander is concerned, not only the literary, but also the historical-scholarly debate on the great conqueror has strongly been determined by both the respective circumstances of the time and the world view of the discussants. And it seems as if in Germany, but not only there, for a long time, in the aftermath of older, partly antique judgements on Alexander, as it were in cyclical phases, the same – opposing, moralising and character-related – views of Alexander were repeatedly endeavoured: Alexander the

[8] For *Battle of Alexander* as an 'image of space' (*Raumbild*) see Asendorf 2017, 67–91; in a poem the writer W. G. Sebald appreciated the overall composition of the painting (see the quotation at the beginning of the article): 'The poet produces a work of art in the process of remembering and discovering not ideologically pre-programmed insights, on the basis of which he is able to perceive scenes of horror, destruction and cruelty without glossing them over, but also without classifying them as necessary and unavoidable in a deterministic historical narrative; rather, he places them next to scenes full of sensual beauty' ('Der Dichter produziert zuletzt ein Kunstwerk im Prozess des Erinnerns und Entdeckens nicht ideologisch vorprogrammierter Einsichten, anhand derer er Szenen des Grauens, der Zerstörung und der Grausamkeit wahrzunehmen vermag, ohne sie zu beschönigen, aber auch ohne sie als notwendig und unvermeidbar in eine deterministische Geschichtserzählung einzuordnen; er setzt sie vielmehr neben Szenen voll sinnlicher Schönheit' (Dorothea von Mücke) (www.wgsebald.de/alex.html (accessed 22 April 2019)).

bringer of civilisation, adventurer and world opener on the one hand; Alexander the destroyer and mass murderer on the other.

The epoch-making work of Johann Gustav Droysen stands at the beginning of the modern scholarly debate on Alexander in Germany. It announces that Alexander's place was now sought in a world history that, with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, was understood as a meaningful, coherent and goal-oriented overall process of events. The work also sets new accents in the characterisation and evaluation of the time after the violent unification of Greece by Philip II as a 'historically worthy' (*geschichtswürdig*) one and even finds a new term for it (*Hellenism*). Shortly before Droysen, who is to be treated in detail in what follows, the son of the great 'enlightened' traveller to the Orient Carsten Niebuhr, Barthold Georg Niebuhr, in his Bonn Lectures of 1829/30 (which were published only later), had as it were uncoupled the judgement on Alexander's personality from the judgement on his historical effectiveness. Harsh judgement on the despotic behaviour of the Macedonian king and his acts of injustice did not prevent the principled appreciation of Alexander's military achievement, which had had consequences: the 'servitude (of Asia) under Europe' ('Dienstbarkeit (Asiens) unter Europa') and the creation of the linguistic prerequisites for the implementation of Christianity.[9]

In a different way, a contemporary of Droysen solved the dilemma of divergences that existed between the weaknesses of the personality of the world ruler and the long-term effects of his deeds: according to the philosopher Ludwig Flathe, who in 1832 and 1834 published a two-volume history of Macedonia and the kingdoms ruled by Macedonian kings (*Geschichte Makedoniens und der Reiche, welche von macedonischen Königen beherrscht wurden*), the 'hero king' (*Heldenkönig*) Alexander, unlike in Hellas, from whom he robbed freedom like his father, created a Persian-Macedonian empire in a wise and calculating way, humane towards the new subjects and to their advantage. It was an empire, however, ruggedly opposed to the 'demands of the life of nations' ('den Anforderungen des Völkerlebens'). According to Flathe, the 'eternal world spirit' ('der ewige Weltgeist') was interested 'in preparing' the Macedonian Greeks and peoples of the Orient 'for the quiet toleration of foreign tyranny' ('für das ruhige Dulden fremder Gewaltherrschaft vorzubereiten') by the victory of the Macedonians; the rule of Rome insinuated with it was 'necessary for the eternal world spirit (whose ways are marked

[9] Niebuhr 1848–51; for him see Bichler 2009 (2010), 211–12.

as "dark" [*dunkel*]), in order to be able to establish a new existence [a Christian-Occidental order] on the ruins of antiquity' ('dem ewigen Weltgeiste nöthig, um einst auf den Trümmern des Alterthumes ein neues Dasein gründen zu können').[10]

The Catholic convert and monarchist Friedrich Schlegel had solved the dilemma in another way in 1828. To him, who in 1796 had described Alexander as a 'far too good and human hero' ('viel zu gute[n] und menschliche[n] Held[en]') with tremendously 'many virtuous elements and beautiful traits' ('viele[n] tugendhafte[n] Elemente[n] und schöne[n] Züge[n]'), Alexander had had the great intention to 'elevate the malformed Asians to a genuinely human education' ('die missgebildeten Asiaten zu einer echt menschlichen Bildung zu erheben'). The great imperial formations, based on conquest politics and originally native to the Orient, now appeared as a fatal 'habit' (*Gewohnheit*) continuing to the present day. It was not Alexander or Leonidas, but Plato and Aristotle who safeguarded Greece's heritage.[11]

Droysen's Image of Alexander

Johann Gustav Droysen, born on 6 July 1808 in the small town of Treptow on the Rega, studied classical philology in Berlin, but also attended philosophical lectures (among others by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel), as well as those in the fields of geography, history, law and theology.[12] In 1831 he earned his doctorate with August Boeckh as his supervisor, and he taught from 1833 as a *Privatdozent* and unsalaried Extraordinary Professor of Ancient History at the University of Berlin, besides his work as a high school teacher. During these years Droysen published, apart from his famous book on Alexander (see later in this chapter), a translation of the works of Aeschylus in 1832 and a paraphrase of Aristophanes' comedies (1835–8). In the spring of 1840 Droysen was appointed Professor of History at the University of Kiel, where he succeeded as an academic teacher and increasingly turned to contemporary history as his subject of study. At the end of March 1848 he was sent to the German Bundestag by the Provisional Government of Schleswig-Holstein as a member of the so-called Committee of the Seventeen; he then became a representative of the

[10] Flathe 1832–1834; for him see Bichler 2009 (2010), 213–14.
[11] Schlegel 1828 (1979); see Bichler 2009 (2010), 215.
[12] For the following chapter on Droysen see Wiesehöfer 2018a; cf. also Bichler 2009 (2010), 207–18; Briant 2016.

fifth Holstein electoral district in the National Assembly (among other things as secretary in the Constitutional Committee) where he fought for the Lesser German solution under Prussian leadership. In the winter term of 1851/2 Droysen followed a call to the University of Jena, where he worked mainly on Prussian history and also gave a lecture on the theory of history for the first time. Called to Berlin University in 1859/60 against the will of its faculty, Droysen, who had always considered it Prussia's mission to unify Germany, was appointed 'Historiographer of the Brandenburg State' in 1877. His main works on Prussian history and historiographical methodology during his Jena and Berlin years were: *The Life of Count York von Wartenburg* (*Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen York von Wartenburg*), *The History of Prussian Politics* (*Geschichte der preußischen Politik*) and *Outline of the Principles of History* (*Grundriss der Historik*). In the 1870s he resumed his work on the history of Hellenism (see later in this chapter). On 19 June 1884, Droysen died shortly before his seventy-sixth birthday.

In his works Johann Gustav Droysen intended to portray the fusion of Greek, Oriental and Jewish culture(s) (with the 'Hellenic spirit' being the decisive part) as an essential condition for the rise of Christianity (and Islam). According to Droysen's view the meaningful, providentially led historical process could be demonstrated in a careful study of the sources (and not only philosophically as with Hegel), and Alexander played an outstanding role in it insofar as he, as the founder of a new unity, became the forerunner of a purer and universal view of God, as it could unfold in Christianity, but also in Islam. But Droysen himself did not meet this claim, raised in prefaces and concluding remarks of his *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1833) and *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (vols. 1–2, Hamburg: Perthes 1836–43, almost identical (see later in this chapter) in the new edition: *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, 3 parts, Gotha: Perthes, 1877–8), since his historical narrative of the history of the Hellenistic world stops in the year 220 BC. It is only with broad brush strokes that later historical developments are drawn, and with regard to world history, even the time when Rome had become lord of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the areas as far as the Euphrates, and the Parthians masters of the territories from the Indus to Armenia, turned out to be a time of transition. Ultimately this development became decisive: the formation of a Christian Europe and a Muslim Orient. In Droysen's view, it remained relevant up to the present day. In contrast to his teacher Hegel, for whom the Greeks and Orientals 'had already contributed to the self-knowledge of the World Spirit, before Alexander ferried to Asia', Droysen had Alexander start a new era, laying

the foundations for a new unitary world. He wanted to see Alexander on the one hand as an absolutely positive historical personality, and on the other as the initiator of a development with huge historical consequences. Droysen's Alexander is the 'rational hero, bearer of a clear plan and long-term vision, careful to put a policy of collaboration with the Persians into effect, and to open new trade-routes to enhance the empire's unity, in particular the maritime route between the Indus and Babylonia'.[13] However, Alexander's world-historical task was mainly to depart from the policy of his despotic Persian precursors and to fuse Orient and Occident to the mutual benefit of the two and of all human beings.

Three years later, however, in the introduction to the first volume of *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, Alexander, as has rightly been emphasised, recedes 'behind the higher, metaphysical powers' insofar as he is now only a 'tool in the hand of History'.[14] With regard to the economic progress caused by Alexander, Droysen referred to the monetisation of the precious metals hoarded by the Persian kings in the royal treasuries and their integration into the economic cycle, the renunciation of levies in kind, the transformation of the royal court into a place where wealth was generated and distributed, the great (infrastructural and construction) works in Greece and Asia, the creation of new trade routes through the elimination of cataracts in the Tigris and, finally, the establishment of direct connections between the Indus region and Babylon. In Droysen's view all these new initiatives went back to Alexander himself. In recent years, it has increasingly been recognised that Droysen's Alexander on the one hand built to a not inconsiderable degree on the Alexander images of European forerunners, and on the other, especially in Germany, was involved in the 'appreciation' of the Oriental parts ('orientalische Volksthümlichkeiten') of the merging process and the preoccupation with the Persian empire. Despite all the Oriental stereotypes found in him, and the underestimation of the newly discovered Near Eastern material in the second edition of *Geschichte des Hellenismus* of 1877/8, his account of Alexander was more 'progressive' than that of his successors.

Droysen's consistently positive image of Alexander came as a surprise in Germany, and it also encountered substantial reservations for a long time. Those reservations could potentially be strengthened by a negative assessment of the consequences of Alexander's policy for Greece, the Hellenistic world of states, Greek culture, etc. Scholars have also rightfully referred to the influence of George Grote's 'History of Greece' in Germany, which

[13] Briant 2009a, 80. [14] Bichler 1983, 76ff.

barred the way to success for Droysen's 'Alexander'.[15] At the time, the neo-humanist-classicist historiography and the vast majority of the philologists and archaeologists had assumed that classical Greece would have been viable beyond Alexander's rule and that the Macedonian king had, as it were, been its gravedigger. Conversely, Droysen not only thought that Greece had died a natural death, but even accredited modernity to the age of Hellenism. However, the analogy between Macedonia and Prussia, often connected with Droysen, only became successful after the Wars of German Unification, but then remained popular. Against the thesis of such an analogy, it has rightly been pointed out, however, that Alexander's conquests and the resulting world of states were, even in Droysen's verdict, 'not really a historical model for a nation-state mission'.[16] On the other hand, in the case of a clear Prussian analogy, the very positive reception of the work in Great Britain would be hard to explain.

The great renaissance of Droysen's 'Alexander', though not necessarily his view of Alexander, did not begin in the author's lifetime, but only after his death. It came about in a special way around the 100th anniversary of the publication of 'Alexander' in 1933. Apart from a new edition of the book, to which Helmut Berve (see later in this chapter) wrote an introduction, and an article by Arnaldo Momigliano on the occasion of the jubilee, several works on Alexander were published almost simultaneously, as well as the epoch-making article of William Tarn on the 'Unity of Mankind' (1933). The special importance of Ulrich Wilcken as the administrator of the Droysen heritage has been mentioned frequently.[17] In 1894 he had already reissued Droysen's dissertation of 1831 on Ptolemy IV and commented on it extensively. And in his 1931 book on Alexander, Wilcken not only recognised Droysen's pioneering study as 'fundamental and inspiring', but also followed his model in many ways, like in his presentation of Alexander as the 'great economist'. The fact that Droysen's Alexander is still in vogue, as regards content or, at least, the history of scholarship, is shown by the numerous translations of 'Alexander' or even *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (mostly, however, their second editions).[18]

[15] Despite his criticism of Alexander's idealisation, Grote was also aware of the beneficial effects of Alexander's campaign, such as the expansion of geographical knowledge of the East in connection with the increase in means of communication, the multiplication of roads, the expansion of trade traffic, etc.

[16] Bichler 2009 (2010), 216ff.; quotation: p. 217. Cf. also Rebenich 2012, 458ff.

[17] For Droysen and Wilcken see especially Briant 2009b, 180ff.

[18] Wiemer 2012, 95ff.; Briant 2016, 379ff.

The Image of Alexander between World War I and 1933

In Germany[19] the image of Alexander in the time during and after the First World War was determined, apart from the exceptional personality of Karl Julius Beloch, who strongly criticised the Alexander cult of his colleagues (see later in this chapter), by the 'rapture of the hero from the norm'[20] – incidentally not only in Germany, but also in other European countries. The use of terms such as *ingenium*, *titan*, *giant*, *hero* and *superhuman* has been seen as 'a compensation for the trauma of Versailles'.[21] Such a genius, whose personality, actions and effects are unique, cannot be approached – this is the quintessence of the works of this kind – by the usual means of knowledge and language. Even the usual moral standards fail to operate here. Instead, as Helmut Berve[22] expressed it in 1926 in the introduction to his large-scale study on the prosopography of the Alexander empire, which is still useful today, it is the highest attainable goal of knowledge to 'forebode and feel the genius, which only the vision of the equal genius directly achieves'.[23] The geniality could refer to the most diverse phenomena: the development of a special form of monarchy, outstanding military-tactical abilities, an outstanding organisational or economic-political concept, the expansion of the *oikumene*, and, last but not least, the civilisational achievement of the Hellenisation of the Orient, significant in cultural history. These last three achievements, as already indicated, were especially emphasised by Wilcken, Droysen's hereditary guardian, in his Alexander book of 1931.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, not least the Hellenisation or 'Europeanisation' of the Orient in the context of the founding of world empires (still) met with reservations, for instance with the great philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1915).[24] On the one hand the idea of the world empire itself was an 'Oriental' one; on the other the Orient in the long run could not be 'Europeanised', not even by force; the laws of nature stood in opposition to this. One year later Walter Otto also criticised Alexander's plans for world domination, referring to the Macedonian's alleged plans to break national ties at the universal

[19] Cf. Bichler 2018.
[20] 'Entrückung des Helden aus dem Normalmaß': Bichler 2009 (2010), 219.
[21] Demandt 1972, 340.
[22] For Berve see Christ 1990, Günther 2002, and especially Rebenich 2001.
[23] 'Ahnend den Genius (zu) spüren, den unmittelbar nur die Schau des ebenbürtigen Genius erreicht': Berve 1926, XI.
[24] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1915. For Wilamowitz see Calder 2012.

level.[25] It is precisely this tendency towards denationalisation and cosmopolitanisation of which Alexander is accused or which is identified as a consequence of his formation of a world empire. In the time of the Weimar Republic, it showed the ambivalence of Alexander's heritage to some historians who were otherwise willing to recognise the brilliant strategist Alexander and his victorious campaign in the East. Alexander may have been a leading innovator of the highest knowledge of God realised in Christianity, but he was also responsible for unrealistic ideas of unification (Julius Kaerst[26]), for a 'program to level the peoples' ('völkernivellierendes Programm'), for the first forms of cosmopolitan associations that, like the League of Nations, were not even meaningful in recent times (Theodor Birt[27]). Wilcken, the most internationally respected German Alexander historian after Droysen, whose book had already been translated into English in 1932, saw similar dangers but released Alexander from any guilt for the 'reaction of the Orient against Hellenism' and the racial mixture associated with Orientalisation. On the one hand Alexander had striven for this mixture only between Greeks/Macedonians and Iranians; on the other he had regarded it as the best means of guaranteeing harmony and friendship in the world.[28] Although he met them in his criticism of Alexander's alleged policy of equality of the peoples of the empire – although his reasons were more Social Darwinian – Karl Julius Beloch remained an outsider as a critic of Alexander the strategist and statesman.

Alexander in National Socialist Times

It is no wonder then that the controversy on Alexander's 'policy of fusion' in the years between 1933 and 1945 gained special significance in the German public and in German ancient history, since it concerned issues of world monarchy and cosmopolitanism. It must be recognised, however, that in National Socialist times there never was a uniform view of antiquity or Alexander, and this applies both to the statements of the political elite and to historical research. On the other hand, it can be held that approaches in 'racial theory' (*Rassenkunde*) – already extant in minority opinions – became increasingly important in the popular and professional discourse.

Helmut Berve, from 1940 to 1943 the rector of the University of Leipzig, rated Alexander's policy of fusion in a completely different, much more

[25] Otto 1916. For Otto see Seibert 2002.
[26] Kaerst 1922. For Kaerst see Christ 1999, 184–9.
[27] Birt 1925. For Birt see Bengtson 1955.
[28] Wilcken 1931. For Wilcken see Palme 2012a.

positive way than most of the other people who wrote books or articles on the Macedonian king. For Berve, Alexander appears to have been a severe and far-sighted 'racial breeder' who – not least for military reasons – had worked hard to merge the Macedonian-Hellenic and the equally superior Iranian race ('kraftvolles Volkstum Irans') in order to confer more stability on his empire.[29] Other 'Asian elements' should be expressly excluded from this close connection.[30]

Among the most prominent Nazis, it was especially Alfred Rosenberg, the leading ideologue and later notorious leader of the so-called Imperial Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, who became concerned about Alexander's plans. In his opinion, neither a 'universal monarchy' nor a 'fusion of peoples' had been in the Macedonian king's mind, but the blood mixture of the racially related Persians and Greeks in order to avoid further conflicts between the two. According to Rosenberg, the fact that these plans had not become reality was partly due to the 'bastardisation' of the Persians by the lower Semitic-Oriental class, and partly by the fact that the 'Nordic-Macedonian Grafting Cultures' ('Pfropfkulturen') had not been able to enforce 'their concepts of honour' against 'Semites, Babylonians and Syrians'.[31] Rosenberg's 'Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts' was one of the most controversial works written by a National Socialist – not least because of its decidedly anti-Church and anti-Christian tendency. However, one should not overestimate its impact on the German public. The Austrian ancient historian Fritz Schachermeyr, one of the main protagonists of racialist studies in German ancient history, also rated Alexander's policy of fusion markedly negative.[32] The Macedonian had not only allowed the mixture of the blood of his racially superior compatriots and that of the Iranians – the latter having already been damaged by an 'Asiatic [i.e. Semitic] racial introgression' ('Rasseneinkreuzung'). He was also to blame for the fact that the race-protecting principle of 'Volkhaftigkeit' had been abandoned,[33] that, apart from the Macedonians, Greeks and other peoples of the Aegean had also been drawn into 'the chaos of blood'.[34] All this, in Schachermeyr's view, had ultimately led to the dissolution of the Nordic impact on race and the 'pseudo-ideal' of a 'world citizenship' in Hellenistic times.[35]

Categories such as 'foreign infiltration' ('Überfremdung') or 'bonds of blood and spirit' ('Bande von Blut und Geist') were introduced into scholarship by the Marburg historian Fritz Taeger, who came to an overall

[29] Bichler 2001 (2010), 88. [30] Berve 1938, particularly p. 159. [31] Rosenberg 1933, 152.
[32] For Schachermeyr see Näf 1994; Pesditschek 2009; Pesditschek 2012a.
[33] Schachermeyr 1944, 242. [34] Schachermeyr 1944, 243. [35] Schachermeyr 1933, 599.

negative assessment of Alexander's policy of fusion.[36] However, one must give Taeger credit for the fact that his work, unlike that of his colleagues Berve and Schachermeyr, included views that were contrary to Nazi ideas – for example, his portrayal of Judaism as a culturally creative, not a disintegrating historical driving force. From 1918 to 1936 Ernst Kornemann had held the chair at the University of Breslau. In his 1943 study on Alexander he assumed that the Macedonian king had planned a Macedonian-Persian state, similar to that of the Achaemenids with its symbiosis of Medes and Persians. Alexander was, unlike his successors, acquitted of being behind the disastrous developments of Hellenism.[37] We find similar arguments in the works of Kornemann's student Peter Julius Junge, a devoted National Socialist, who finally died in Stalingrad. He, who, with his broad view of antiquity, had followed in Eduard Meyer's footsteps, spoke in his book on Darius I of Alexander's plans to create a universal rule ('Weltherrentum') of Macedonians and Iranians. He presented the king as a prophetic 'Nordic Warrior King' ('nordischer Heerkönig').[38]

Even before the National Socialists' rise to power, the Prague historian Victor Ehrenberg, whose path would lead him into exile in England in 1939, had warned of Nazi historical ideologies and their adoption by his colleagues. Well connected to the mainstream in his negative assessment of the Greek world of the fourth century and the Hellenistic world, Ehrenberg implied, in 1935 – in contrast to Schachermeyr or Berve, who later polemically attacked him for that[39] – that Alexander had had the idea of a 'cosmopolitanism that no longer asked for nationality and ethnic origin'.[40] Not Alexander's racial consciousness, 'but only his personal and increasing awareness of his royal position' had been the 'psychological reason' for his policy of fusion.[41]

That the idea of cosmopolitanism[42] could also be connected with Nazi racial theory is illustrated by a work of Walther Kolbe of 1936.[43] Here, Alexander longs for the 'reconciliation of all peoples' ('Versöhnung aller Völker') by means of blood mixture, but such cosmopolitan ideas, in Kolbe's view, are always connected with the loss of the 'inner life force' ('innere Lebenskraft') of an empire or state. Kolbe's more recent historical example for that disastrous development is the awarding of French citizenship to Africans and Asians. In the works of Hans-Erich Stier, a student of

[36] Taeger 1939, I, 426. For Taeger see Wiesehöfer 2018b.
[37] Kornemann 1943. For Kornemann see Baltrusch 2012a.
[38] Junge 1944, 148ff. For Junge see Ulf 1985, 58 n. 24. [39] Berve 1935.
[40] Ehrenberg 1935, 175. For Ehrenberg see Wiesehöfer 2018b. [41] Ehrenberg 1935, 163.
[42] Cf. Bichler 2014 (2016), 196–206. [43] Kolbe 1936. For Kolbe see Riekenberg 1980.

Eduard Meyer, we recognise, however, a traditional view of Alexander's actions, devoid of racialist ideologies: Stier's Alexander appears, in Reinhold Bichler's words, as a 'Champion of the West' ('Sachwalter des Okzidents') who, however, increasingly forgets about his own cultural roots.[44]

The range of historical reflection on Alexander's policy of fusion within and outside the framework of the regime's ideological expectations is finally proven by the 1943 lecture of the Bonn ancient historian Fritz Oertel, who on the one hand – with all due respect for Alexander as a brilliant leader, but in the footsteps of Nazi ideology – criticises Alexander's renunciation of his own 'nationality' ('Volkstum'). On the other hand Oertel leaves those models by praising Alexander's efforts to get his subjects' approval of his reign, and, at the same time, by criticising the king's brutality and unbridled expansionism that did not take into consideration Asia's 'boundlessness'.[45]

The Image of Alexander after 1945

The Allied victory in 1945 forced the German ancient historians to revise their views of history: Fritz Schachermeyr abandoned his fundamental concerns about Alexander's policy of fusion. He now appreciated Alexander's vision of a peaceful and harmonious world state; his efforts to foster cosmopolitanism, however, came too early – when Greece was not yet ready for it.[46] Helmut Berve changed some elements of his terminology, but adhered to the idea that Alexander, 'with an almost religious fervour', had pursued the idea of a fusion of the Macedonian-Iranian ruling class.[47] Franz Altheim was fascinated by Alexander's idea of a global empire,[48] and Fritz Taeger also undertook only minor modifications to his view of Alexander.[49] Ernst Kornemann now judged the Orient more favourably, thanks to the alleged Iranian influence on it, and made Greeks and Persians alike the creators of Europe.[50] Hans-Erich Stier's Alexander was changed – like

44 Stier 1940; cf. Bichler 2009 (2010), 227. For Stier see Christ 1999, 274ff.; Gauger 2007.

45 Oertel 1943. For Oertel see Palme 2012b.

46 Schachermeyr 1949, 489–96. For an evaluation of Schachermeyr's turn cf. Pesditschek 2009, I, 389–94.

47 Berve 1952, II, 192ff.

48 Altheim 1947, particularly pp. 201–13. For Altheim see Baltrusch 2012b.

49 Taeger 1950ff. For those modifications cf. Wiesehöfer 2018b.

50 Kornemann 1948, I, 34–40. Cf. Demandt 1972, 349.

his Augustus – into a veritable 'World Prince of Peace'[51]; and finally, Victor Ehrenberg did indeed recognise the despotic traits in Alexander – he compared him to a 'sultan' – but he also increasingly viewed him as a 'champion against nation-state restriction and racist arrogance', as the first true cosmopolitan.[52]

Members of the generation of young German or Austrian ancient historians in particular, influenced by the shocking news of the unparalleled Nazi crimes, came to a pointedly critical view of Alexander. Hermann Strasburger, persecuted because of his being a 'Mischling of the first degree' as defined by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935,[53] adopted a dedicated victim's perspective.[54] Berve's student Franz Hampl[55] saw Alexander's deeds solely determined by the king's desire to gain an until then unknown degree of power and influence.[56] Finally, his colleague Alfred Heuß,[57] also a student of Berve's, who had been a professor in Breslau between 1941 and 1945, pointed decidedly to the situatedness of any kind of Alexander reception. However, up to the 1970s, all three were still in a minority position in Germany and Austria; it was Berve, Schachermeyr and the others who set the tone.[58] Only in the wake of the criticism of the Vienna expatriate Ernst Badian[59] on previous research on Alexander,[60] did German ancient historians increasingly pursue a form of research that acknowledged the importance of source criticism – that is an intensive analysis of Greek and Roman author's views of Alexander – and tried not to succumb to prevailing trends, for example of moralising. However, it is to be warned against the assumption that criticism of the despot Alexander should have led, as it were, to a thoroughly negative image of Alexander. To this day representations of Alexander address his many victims of Alexander, but at the same time present Alexander as a military strategic genius, a globaliser or an economic and cultural moderniser.

The confrontation with the extreme positions which had assumed that Alexander had had far-reaching ideas and plans led – in the footsteps of Badian – also in Germany not only to stricter source criticism, but also to

[51] Stier 1973; Bichler 2009 (2010), 227. For a contemporaneous comment on that cf. Hampl 1975, 202–22.

[52] Ehrenberg 1946; Bichler 2009 (2010), 228ff. For the problem of Alexander's alleged world-historical legacy, cf. Bichler 2014 (2016), 206–11.

[53] For Strasburger see Walter 2012; Bernstein and Leppin 2013.

[54] Strasburger 1954/82.

[55] For Hampl see Weiler 1985 and Deglau 2017.

[56] Hampl 1958, 81.

[57] For Heuß cf. Rebenich 2000; Rexroth 2013.

[58] For German ancient history after 1945 cf. Bichler 1989 (2010); Rebenich 2015.

[59] For Badian see Pesditschek 2012b.

[60] Badian 1958. Badian's collected essays on Alexander: Badian 2012.

the preference of detailed research over general works.[61] Both trends did not prevent sketches of (constructed) images of Alexander's personality, ambivalences in the evaluation of the king and his instrumentalisation as a projection figure, but we hear more and more calls for no longer judging Alexander's biography 'on the basis of personality images', for 'not regarding Alexander as the sole decision-making power and *persona agens* isolated from his socio-political environment' and for embedding him in an Near Eastern line of empire buildings as well as for 'differentiating the literary level from the political'.[62]

These demands have consequences, not least in view of the popularity of the Alexander theme in a broader public and in the most diverse media – the Alexander film by Oliver Stone with its Tarn concept of 'brotherhood of mankind' and its decided Orientalism is only mentioned here as an example.[63] First of all, comprehensive historical accounts of Alexander in Germany should primarily be written by colleagues who are proven experts in both worlds – the Greek-Macedonian and the ancient Near Eastern one – or who strive for cooperation with colleagues who are able to balance an existing lack of competence. By being or becoming familiar with indigenous testimonies and traditions (including archaeological ones) and their prerequisites, scholars can escape being taken in by topical or Orientalistic images of the East in ancient sources and research literature, and they will beware of inappropriate terminology, inappropriate comparisons or, for example, the idea that Alexander opened up any new spaces.[64] Thirdly, I hope that this chapter will also show how important it is to ascertain how, when, why, by whom and under what conditions images of Alexander were created and what interests guided the dissemination of these images. Each (German) book on Alexander should therefore have its chapter on the reception of Alexander.

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[61] The most prominent recent works on Alexander in Germany are Demandt 2009; Gehrke 2013; Lauffer 2004; Müller 2019; Wiemer 2015; Will 2009. For a review of recent literature on Alexander see Gehrke 2008, 136–58, and Bowden 2014.

[62] Müller 2019, 9ff. [63] Harrison 2010. [64] Cf. Bichler 2014 (2016), 190–6.

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19 Alexander the Gay and the Gloryhole That Was Greece

LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES AND SHAUN TOUGHER

> I think he probably was gay. There was a translation error. It was supposed to say 'Alexander the Gay', but someone translated it wrong to 'Alexander the Great'.[1]

When Robin Lane Fox's biography of Alexander the Great first appeared in 1973 it was marketed as 'the dashing story of the spellbinding young gay who conquered the world'.[2] Of course in those innocent, far-off, dreamy days – and certainly within the ivory towered publishing houses of academe – 'gay' had a very different resonance, although we should remember that it was also in the early 1970s that homosexuals began to define themselves through the use of the word 'gay', outing themselves in the first open declarations of a specific sexual identity in Western culture. By the time Lane Fox's *Alexander the Great* went into its fourth edition, to coincide with the release of Oliver Stone's movie *Alexander* in 2004 (post-Gay Activists Alliance, post-AIDS, but firmly in the era of the metrosexual male), Alexander was remarketed by the publisher as 'tough, resolute, fearless . . . a born warrior and ruler of passionate ambition'. Passionate then, but no longer gay.

Ever since the twentieth century discovered 'that horrid thing Freud called sex' and began to consider sexual preferences an integral part of sexual identity, Alexander the Great has been scrutinised and analysed for what his love life said (or says) about the man himself.[3] In his pulp scholarly book *Alexander's Lovers*, for instance, Andrew Chugg notes that, 'to understand Alexander well, it is necessary to follow his heart more than his policies'.[4] The question of Alexander's homosexuality, once the preserve of scholars such as Tarn whose determined attempt in 1948 'to straighten the matter out' (no pun intended, surely) and close future discussion down, met only with Badian's hatchet job of a dissection of Tarn's own pedantic conservatism a decade later.[5] The sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s

[1] www.fanpop.com/clubs/random/answers/show/251277/alexander-great-gay-not (accessed 29 December 2016).

[2] As recounted by Lane Fox 2004: 27–8; see further Lane Fox 1973.

[3] Nancy Mitford, attributing the quotation to E. F. Benson's Lucia; see Ogden 2009, 203.

[4] Chugg 2006, iii. [5] Tarn 1948, 2.319–26; Badian 1958.

stimulated even Classicists to think in new and exciting ways, and Alexander's sexuality was thrown wide open for debate – in classrooms, on gay political marches, in popular literature, in magazines, in pornography – and the strengthening gay communities of the liberal West happily embraced the ancient ruler not only as a gay prototype, but also as a gay hero. In recent decades enthusiastic (if flawed) gay-interest websites have been busily appropriating Alexander as a role model for the modern gay man; so much so, indeed, that the *Cassell's Queer Companion* entry dedicated to the Macedonian conqueror notes that Alexander is a 'staple in the long list of historical gays that have been claimed from history'.[6]

'Claiming' is one of the traditional ways in which gay men and women and (increasingly) transgendered people have sought to demonstrate the political clout and the social and cultural worth of their sexuality or gender through identification with historical figures who have supposedly shared their same-sex desires or idiosyncratic gender characteristics. Oftentimes this has meant penetrating a smokescreen sent up by 'straight' historians who have underplayed, misrepresented, tried to remove or purposefully erased all trace of queerness in order to 'protect' their subject.

Famous individuals from Classical antiquity have long provided inspiration for gay men and women who regard the concept of a queer golden age as aspirational, a blueprint for a future free from prejudice, judgement, ridicule and hatred. Out of this idea emerged lesbian sexuality, championed by Sappho, and male homosexual identity (and not simply the platonic sort) as emphasised by the figure of Alexander, a vigorous, active, masculine sexual identity that empowers gay men. As Alastair Blanshard notes, 'the [sexual] legacy of the Greek world still lurks under the surface, always ready to bubble up [and] no one has ever "forgotten" that Alexander the Great indulged in homosexual acts'.[7] This is why Alexander heads the list of nine gay men and four gay women at gayheroes.com.[8]

This chapter is not about the real Alexander; how can it be? Nor is it about the historicity or even the historiography of his sexuality, although these thorny subjects continue to perplex and divide Alexander scholars and Alexander devotees alike. This chapter is not concerned with ideologies surrounding ancient expressions of sexual identity either, but it does look at contemporary expressions of the sexual and gendered self because

[6] 'Alexander and Hephaestion', in Stewart and Hamer 1995, 9. [7] Blanshard 2010, 163.

[8] http://gayheroes.com/main.htm (accessed 20 January 2017). The other men are Paul the Apostle, Richard the Lionhearted, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Handel, Tchaikovsky, Abraham Lincoln and Lawrence of Arabia. The four women are Sappho, Joan of Arc, Florence Nightingale and Gertrude Stein. Also on the list are the Gay Penguins.

our focus is exploring modern concepts of homosexual identities which have attached themselves to the figure of Alexander. It is the modern perception of Alexander's sexuality – his queerness – that concerns us. We explore this image in literature, film and other forms of popular culture in the twenty-first century, but take as our starting point a dominating and influential image of Alexander created in the twentieth century – primarily the late 1960s and early 1970s – by the author Mary Renault.[9] Thus we span a period of incrementally increasing gay visibility in world politics and international culture. The material we choose to explore is, out of necessity, selective but it is, we argue, representative of current trends in the queering of Alexander. Alexander's queerness, it transpires, is more than the sum of its parts. There are numerous queer Alexanders, each adopting the different personas of the ever-shifting, ever morphing, multivalent world of queer identity. Alexander can be the romantic hero, dreaming of a better world, safe in the arms of his boyfriend; Alexander can be the cock-hungry porn star, gagging for rough sex with his squaddies; and Alexander can be the all-singing, all-dancing Broadway hoofer, the American boy-next-door. But in the images we examine here, Alexander is always a figure of some queen's gay fantasy, and even if the creator of that image is not necessarily male or homosexual, Alexander is claimed by the gay community. As Alvear and Shecter have noted, the gay 'claiming' of Alexander affords homosexual men a sexual fantasy figure with historical kudos and, for some, an element of camp: 'he was hot, his boyfriends were hotter, he had a media savvy PR team and he could throw hissy fits that would shock Naomi Campbell'.[10]

[9] It is interesting that the gay British playwright Terence Rattigan also turned to Alexander as a subject in his *Adventure Story* staged in London in 1949: Rattigan 1950; Wansell 1995, esp. 190–3; Lane Fox 2010. Alexander was played by Paul Scofield and Hephaestion by Julian Dallas (having replaced Richard Burton: Wansell 1995, 185–6). The play is primarily concerned with rulership and the role of parents in Alexander's life. It skirts around the question of the relationship between Alexander and Hephaestion (Hephaestion describes Alexander as his 'best friend': Rattigan 1950, 7; Lane Fox 2010, 65, 75, 86), and notably does not include Alexander's eunuch lover Bagoas (as noted by Lane Fox 2010, 63, 86). The critic Ivor Brown in the *Observer* found Alexander 'sexually neuter' (Wansell 1995, 191), though Lane Fox 2010, 86, notes 'Rattigan was himself a homosexual, but in England of the 1940s and 1950s homosexuality was censored on stage and was still a criminal offense.' The play is typically seen as a flop and a curiosity in Rattigan's canon; it ran for only 107 performances, though in 1961 the BBC broadcast a production of the play as part of its Sunday Night Theatre, starring Sean Connery as Alexander and William Russell as Hephaestion.

[10] Alvear and Shecter 2004, iv.

Man-on-Man: Alexander and Hephaestion on Page and on Screen

Any treatment of the perception of Alexander in modern popular culture must engage with the celebrated Alexander the Great trilogy – comprising *Fire from Heaven* (1969), *The Persian Boy* (1972) and *Funeral Games* (1981) – of the novelist Mary Renault (1905–83).[11] Gore Vidal described Renault's 'Alexandriad' as 'one of . . . the most unexpectedly original works of art' of the twentieth century, while Jeanne Reames-Zimmerman, whose website devoted to Alexander the Great in fiction is titled *Beyond Renault*, has observed that 'the trilogy remains the best thing out there in mainstream fiction on Alexander'.[12] Renault was evidently preoccupied with Alexander as he appears elsewhere in her work.[13] He is alluded to at the end of her first historical novel *The Last of the Wine* (1956), which takes the form of the memoirs of the Athenian Alexias, who lived through the Peloponnesian War. It is revealed at the end that the memoirs of Alexias were discovered by his grandson (also called Alexias), who was 'Phylarch of the Athenian horse to the divine Alexander, King of Macedon, Leader Supreme of all the Hellenes' (381). The selection of the name Alexias is suggestive in itself. In *The Lion in the Gateway* (1964), Renault's telling of the Persian invasions of Greece for younger readers, 'golden Alexander' is anticipated (161). He makes an appearance in *The Mask of Apollo* (1966), written as the memoirs of the actor Nikeratos. This is especially concerned with the government of Syracuse under the Dionysii and the figures of Dion and Plato, but in the last chapter Niko goes to Pella to perform Aeschylus' *The Myrmidons*, taking the role of Achilles. After the performance the teenage Alexander, then being taught by Aristotle, comes backstage and talks to the actor (368–72).[14] The episode of Nikeratos meeting Alexander is also related in *Fire from Heaven* itself, from Aristotle's point of view (178–9), and Niko and his lover the actor Thettalos make further appearances in that novel, while Thettalos features in *The Persian Boy* too.

[11] For Renault see especially Sweetman 1993 and Zilboorg 2001, but also Wolfe 1969, Dick 1972, McEwan 1987, 29–78, and Wallace 2005, 108–17. *Fire from Heaven* was published in New York in 1969 but in London in 1970.

[12] Vidal quoted on the back of the dust jacket for the American first edition of *Funeral Games*. Reames-Zimmerman: http://home.earthlink.net/~mathetria/Beyond_Renault/renault.html (accessed 3 December 2002).

[13] Sweetman 1993, 255.

[14] Alexander's attractive but awe-inspiring character, political ambitions, military understanding, generosity, attachment to Hephaestion, love of theatre and obsession with Achilles and the *Iliad* are quickly conveyed, all pointing to his future life and actions.

Alexander was also to feature in the 1971 short story 'The Horse from Thessaly', which focusses on Bucephalus.[15]

Further, it seems that Alexander could serve as an inspiration for other characters. Renault's biographer David Sweetman finds echoes of her Theseus in Alexander,[16] but in fact Renault's Theseus was informed by her appreciation of Alexander.[17] In her notes to *The King Must Die* (1958) she reflects on the image of Theseus that she created. She rejected the notion of him as a hulking butch hero and read him as a slight, wiry and more quick-witted character. She asserts that he resembled 'Alexander in his precocious competence, gift of leadership, and romantic sense of destiny' (366). Finally, Renault's concern with Alexander is also reflected by the fact that he was the subject of her only 'straight' historical work, *The Nature of Alexander* (1975).

Fundamental to Renault's preoccupation with Alexander was her belief that he was indeed Alexander 'the Great'. She was not impressed with those who demonised Alexander or defended him weakly, and insisted that he should be judged by the standards of his own day.[18] In her notes to *The Persian Boy* she comments on 'a present-day outbreak of . . . blackwashing, [which] goes far beyond a one-sided interpretation of facts to their actual misrepresentation' (406–7). Her insistence that Alexander be judged by the standards of his own day extended to the question of Alexander's sex life; Renault was clear that Alexander lived in a world where men had sex with men as well as women. Renault was bisexual herself, and part of her motivation for shifting from novels set in contemporary Britain to those set in the ancient Greek world seems to have been the opportunity to write about same-sex relationships more easily.[19] The transition is witnessed in her last contemporary novel *The Charioteer* (1953) and her first ancient novel *The Last of the Wine* (1956). *The Charioteer* (a reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*, which plays a central role in the novel) dealt with homosexual men in the context of World War Two; *The Last of the Wine* dealt with same-sex lovers Alexias and Lysias at the time of the Peloponnesian War. Sweetman notes that 'reviews and letters show that many readers

[15] Sweetman 1993, 275. This volume was produced for the occasion of the fiftieth birthday of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh.

[16] Theseus is the main character of *The King Must Die* (1958) and *The Bull from the Sea* (1962).

[17] Zilboorg 2001, 156, sees Theseus as a projection of Renault herself, so ultimately Alexander is a projection of Renault too.

[18] Sweetman 1993, 257–8.

[19] On Renault's bisexuality see for instance Zilboorg 2001, 215–18. Despite her long-term relationship with Julie Mullard, Renault did not think of herself as a lesbian.

considered [*The Last of the Wine*] a sequel to *The Charioteer* as a study in homosexual love'.[20]

Alexander served the subject of same-sex relationships primarily because of his famous attachment to Hephaestion. In *Fire from Heaven* the intensity of their relationship is not in doubt, though the sex is not described (219).[21] Renault's Alexander prioritises the soul over the body, quoting Plato's *Phaedrus* prior to sleeping with Hephaestion (217–18). This seems to reflect Renault's belief that sex was not of great interest to Alexander; rather, it is the closeness and specialness of the bond that is expressed. Hephaestion, like Bucephalus, 'was seen as a limb of Alexander' (332). Alexander dreads being parted from Hephaestion more than bodily torture (363). For Hephaestion himself, Alexander's lack of interest in the physical aspect of their relationship is depicted as a source of some frustration. Renault conjures up a fascinating response by Hephaestion to Ptolemy's assumption that he is having a lot of sex with Alexander:

> He was getting, at least, what he would not have changed for any other human lot; and the world could know it. The rest was his secret; he came to what terms he could with it. Pride, chastity, restraint, devotion to higher things; with such words he made tolerable to himself his meetings with a soul-rooted reluctance, too deep to suffer questioning. Perhaps Olympias' witchcraft had scarred her child; perhaps his father's example. Or, thought Hephaestion, perhaps it was that in this one thing he did not want the mastery, and all the rest of his nature was at war with it; he had entrusted his very life much sooner and more willingly. Once in the dark he had murmured in Macedonian, 'You are the first and the last,' and his voice might have been charged with ecstasy or intolerable grief. Most of the time, however, he was candid, close, without evasions; he simply did not think it very important. One might have supposed that the true act of love was to lie together and talk. (258–9)

Hephaestion suspects that Alexander feels that sex endangers his virtue (260).

While Renault allows that Alexander can be attracted to women (the case of the unfortunate Gorgo; 204–5, 209–12), Alexander's lack of interest in having sex with them is however emphasised (316–17), and underscores the particular partnership he has with Hephaestion. Further, Alexander will not exploit a slave boy for sex either (315–16). Alexander's parents are

[20] Sweetman 1993, 184.

[21] Note also Alexander's interest in and concern for the Theban Sacred Band, which is related to his own relationship with Hephaestion (*Fire from Heaven*, 284, 307–8).

both anxious about Alexander's gender ambiguity. Philip calls him as touchy as a girl (82), and reflects on his son having a girl's voice (118–19); Olympias throws women at her son (261, 266–70) and observes that it is as if Philip has a wife to offer for marriage, not a husband (265). Intriguingly, Philip worries about Alexander's lack of a beard (224), while a Lynkestid peasant even wonders if Alexander is a eunuch (272), echoing Philip thinking that Alexander's singing was like that of Persian eunuchs (119). These incidents clearly anticipate the figure of the eunuch Bagoas, the eponymous Persian boy. Thus in *Fire from Heaven* Renault presents an Alexander who was bisexual (like herself), but who had a particular emotional and physical bond with another man, Hephaestion. For Renault, Alexander's sexuality and sexual activities are part of her understanding of his identity as a great man, a man of virtue; thus this Alexander is a rather chaste gay.

Chastity seems to be the hallmark of Alexander's relationship with Hephaestion in Oliver Stone's 2004 biopic too, although Stone has not stated if he was in any way influenced, directly or indirectly, by Renault's novel. The film's implications are that Hephaestion is Alexander's soulmate, 'his true spouse', as Jeanne Reames puts it, but Stone does not make the sexual relationship explicit.[22] Indeed, a scene which takes place on Alexander's wedding night to Roxane shows a teary-eyed Hephaestion admitting himself into the bridal chamber and proffering Alexander a ring, which Alexander slips onto the ring finger of his left hand, suggesting marriage to a modern audience. But what follows is a protracted sex scene between Alexander and a snarling, rampantly sexed-up Roxane; it is furious lovemaking, perhaps suggesting Alexander's inability to connect emotionally with his bride.

It has been claimed that Warner, the movie studio that financed *Alexander* alongside the German company Intermedia, took steps to deemphasise the movie's gay aspect in its advertising campaign – the trailer declares Alexander's 'passion' for Hephaestion while showing a love scene between the king and Roxane – and in the final on-screen product itself. This is hard to verify. A line from the film – Ptolemy's narration – says clearly that 'Alexander was defeated only once – by Hephaestion's thighs', and indeed for his part, Stone said that his interpretation of Alexander's life and character was true to the historical record:

> I don't want to corrupt history. I don't want to say, 'How do I make this work for a modern audience?' Alexander to me is a perfect blend of male-female,

[22] Reames 2010, 187.

> masculine-feminine, yin-yang. He could communicate with both sides of his nature. When you get to modern-day focus groups, to who'll get offended in Hawaii or Maine, you can't get out of it . . . I'd be naïve not to be concerned, in America, anyway. I didn't know there would be a parallel situation going on.[23]

The 'parallel situation' Stone refers to is that in the wake of the US 2001 presidential election and the passage of prohibitions on gay marriage in a number of states, homosexuality had resurfaced as a focus of debate and controversy among cultural critics. For instance, Bob Waliszewski, a film critic with Focus on the Family, a Christian group, warned of the film's potential to corrupt: 'There will be people who see Alexander the Great's bisexuality as applauding that lifestyle, and unfortunately it will lead some young boys [and] young men down a path that I think they'll regret someday.'[24] Conservative Christians have loudly denounced *Alexander* as 'pro-gay' propaganda from Tinseltown and even the conservative yet card-holding Democrat Classicist Victor Davis Hanson criticised the movie's 'splashy gay motifs'. But for many gay men *Alexander* did not live up to expectations either. Not only did they anticipate a bromance of epic proportions, but they expected some man-on-man on-screen action from sexy testosterone-fuelled bad-boy Irishman Colin Farrell and puppy-eyed, pouting heartthrob (at least in 2004) Jared Leto. What they got was a tepid, shy and ambiguous story of boy-on-boy infatuation. Rosario Dawson's sex scene with Farrell can be found on Pornhub, the open-access adult pornography website, presumably because of its aggressive physicality and lack of emotional connection between the two protagonists; the scene has porn appeal. There is little to be elicited from the soulful gazes of Leto and Farrell, though. Their relationship is not the stuff of blue movies. Therefore, to meet the need of a disappointed demographic, early in 2006 Spanky's Boys Studio released *Alexander the Great Gangbang* (Figure 19.1), a hardcore 'skin flick' starring adult movie sensation Sean Morgan, which centred on (a surprisingly passive) Alexander's erotic encounters with his soldiery:

> When he gets together with his warriors, they all give Alexander what he really wants. Not plundering across the world, but big young cocks, as all the studs take turns with him. Brecken pounds his ass while Nico, Alex

[23] 'Breaking Ground with a Gay Movie Hero', *New York Times*, 20 November 2004. www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/movies/MoviesFeatures/breaking-ground-with-a-gay-movie-hero.html (accessed 28 May 2018).

[24] http://lambdacc.org/pipermail/members_lambdacc.org/2004-November/000037.html (accessed 28 May 2018).

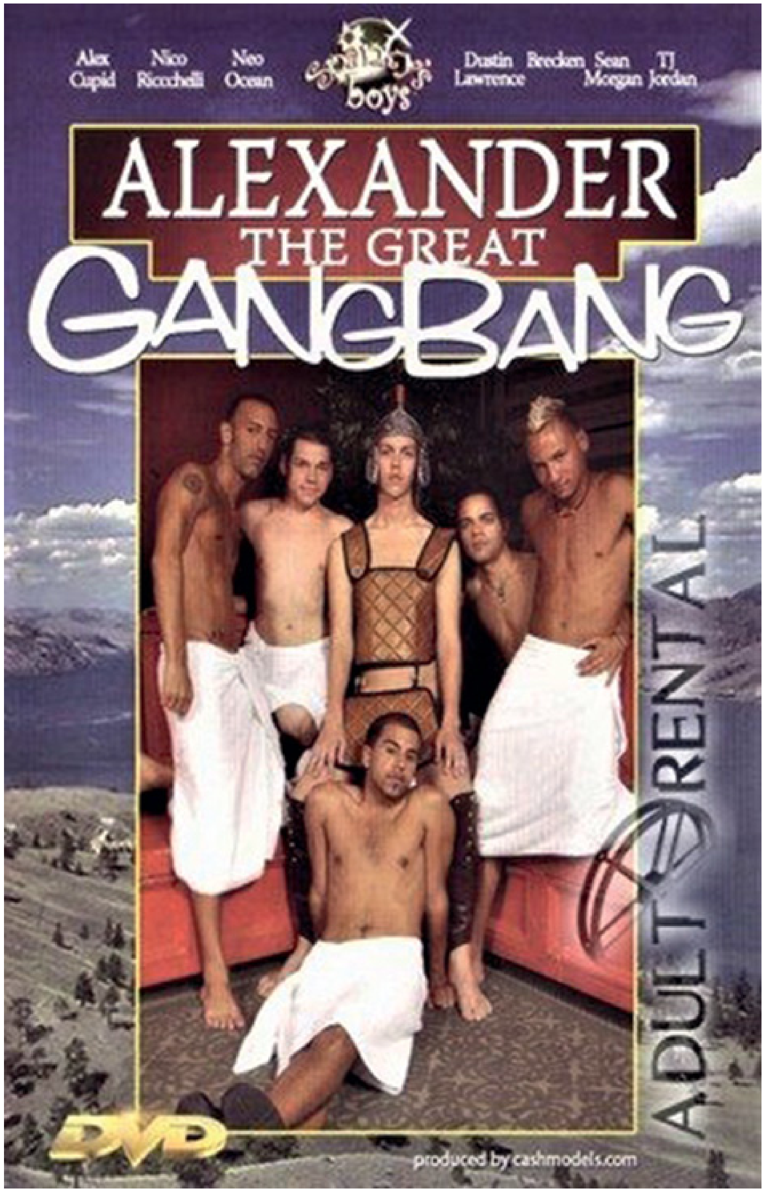


Figure 19.1 *Alexander the Great Gang Bang.* Spanky's Boys Studio 2006

> and Brecken feed his hot mouth. This warrior orgy turns into a gangbang and Alexander is on the bottom. Would you like to join?[25]

Well, would you?

[25] http://iafd.com/title.rme/title=alexander+the+great+gangbang/year=2006/alexander-the-great-gangbang.htm (accessed 28 May 2018).

Alexander: Broadway Baby

The gay affiliation with the Broadway musical is well known (show producers widely consider gay men a reliable Broadway demographic).[26] Not surprisingly, Alexander has made a foray into musical theatre too. In 2007 Stephan deGhelder's *A Kiss from Alexander* went into rehearsal in New York City before premiering in Chicago where it ran for twelve weeks. A few years later, after some major rewrites, *A Kiss from Alexander* was subsequently selected for Gayfest in New York City and enjoyed an extended off-Broadway run to full houses.[27]

The show (scored by Brad Simmons) is a caustic look at musical theatre, following the standard show-within-a-show scenario. While the show is funny and clever, deGhelder was determined that it should not be 'campy'; in fact, the script specifies that the chorus boys be 'tart tongued and witty' but not screaming queens. They perform in the style of Broadway hoofers but they take their Greek choral legacy seriously:

> We are the famous Greek Chorus
> And trust us you'll be thankful for us
> For we comment on the action –
> And, brother, there's some action!
> We implore the gods above us and below us:
> Alexander needs your aid
> When it comes to getting laid
> Who will share his bed: Hephaestion or Bagoas?

Singing of 'the gloryhole that was Greece', the chorus boys laud Alexander's sexual magnetism and obvious physical charms (the script calls for him to be a 'blonde hunk'), drawing, as we have seen, on the common homosexual rhetoric of casting Alexander as first and foremost a sex object, a gay fantasy:

> We've tried to solve a mystery
> From Alpha to Omega, A to Zed
> From Emperors to Persian Kings
> We've rated men on many things
> Like brains and brawn and who was the best in bed.

[26] Clum 1999; see further, 'Gay Musicals': www.queermusicheritage.com/gaymus.html (accessed 18 January 2017).

[27] Personal correspondence with Stephan deGhelder; the authors are grateful for his assistance and his generosity in sharing the libretto and music for *A Kiss from Alexander* with them. See further http://akissfromalexander.com/ (accessed 18 January 2017).

But now we've finished with the text
The votes have all been tallied . . .
Behind one man we've rallied . . .
Of all the men he's rated Ten
In the things that really matter . . .
For endurance too
Every soldier knew
Alexander was truly bionic –
For his column stood
Like a column would
From Corinthian to Ionic!

The casting of muscle-bound actor Craig Ramsay as Alexander (Figure 19.2) heightens the desirability of the hero, while his blonde leonine locks parody the A-list looks of Colin Farrell in Oliver Stone's movie.

And yet at the heart of this musical sits a genuine love story, 'perhaps the greatest love story of all time', the script speculates. Alexander's love for Hephaestion is presented as deep and passionate and eternal. 'While Alexander wanders the afterlife separately and sadly, constantly searching for his lover knowing that if they should ever find each other, a kiss from Alexander would reunite the two for eternity. Not the usual stuff of musical comedy.' Certainly the score's emotional high points focus on the Alexander-Hephaestion relationship, and the much anticipated kiss, which occurs in the second act, is the climax of the action and the peak of the performance. In fact, online fan art tends to focus, in its gentler moments, on a kiss shared by Alexander and Hephaestion, often taking as core inspiration actors (Farrell-Leto) or settings (the balcony in Babylon) from Stone's movie (Figure 19.3). Drawing upon the frequency of this fantasy, deGhelder and Simmons underline the depth of the relationship with two romantic ballads worthy of Rodgers and Hart, 'You and I Making Love Forever' and the title song itself. It is perhaps no surprise that *A Kiss from Alexander* has attained something of a cult status among Broadway queens and the wider gay community.

Outrage: Macedonia, Marriage and the Military

As we have seen, much of the attention given to Alexander, especially on gay-interest internet sites, is to claim him as a homosexual prototype and, often, to provide contemporary gay men with a role model with historical gravitas (and no shortage of sex appeal); the nature and character of Alexander is caught up in current (multiple) projections of queer identity.



Figure 19.2 Craig Ramsay as Alexander

Certainly when Stone's *Alexander* first hit the screens, the Internet erupted with gay fan sites, perhaps seeing in the movie issues which were not there. Long before the film's release rumours were circulating that Stone was making and promoting a gay-focussed (and gay-friendly) life of Alexander, and social media speculation ahead of the film's premier insisted that it would fixate on the ruler's gay identity. As we have noted, angry voices were raised in censure at the idea but particularly vocal opposition came from social media users in Greece:



Figure 19.3 Alexander and Hephaestion. Online fan art

> In Greece the movie *Alexander* is causing great sadness because he is depicted as gay. Although no irrefutable evidence has been proven that he was. It is just a theory and thus a myth. If it has not been proven that he was, I think Hollywood [is] wrong to portray him as a gay. But then again, what else can you expect from a left wing liberal movie industry.[28]

In November 2004 a group of twenty-five Greek lawyers threatened to take legal action against Oliver Stone and to sue Warner Brothers for the defamation of Alexander's character and reputation. Led by Yannis Varnakos, the lawyers declared Stone's representation of Alexander to be 'pure fiction and not a true depiction of Alexander's life', but added that their campaign was 'not against gays'.[29] Although Varnakos insisted that he had not seen the film, he claimed there was enough circumstantial evidence to point to the film's inaccurate references and he attempted to offer an explanation for the legal action by citing (albeit bizarrely) the damage a reinvention of history might do to an American national hero: 'We

[28] https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070624225739AA9d2ZF (accessed 28 December 2016).

[29] 'Bisexual Alexander Angers Greeks': http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/film/4032245.stm (accessed 29 December 2016).

cannot come out and say that President John F. Kennedy was a shooting guard for the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team and so Warner [Brothers] cannot come out and say Alexander was gay.' Warner Brothers' lawyer, Stephen Calvacca (who had represented one of the plaintiffs in a suit over character portrayals in the George Clooney film *The Perfect Storm*), was blunt in his rebuttal:

> Even if Stone had portrayed Alexander as a cross-dressing rodeo clown, it might make little difference from a legal standpoint. The suit's silly. There would be no recognizable cause of action in the U.S. In general, the filmmakers are protected by First Amendment rights [freedom of artistic expression]. If I wrote something that was potentially defamatory about George Washington, his relatives could not sue me.[30]

Eventually, on viewing *Alexander* before its official release date (an event arranged by Warner Brothers), the Greek lawyers dropped their case, although they urged Oliver Stone to include a clear coda in the film's opening titles that *Alexander* was a work of fiction. This Stone rightly ignored. Meanwhile, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) welcomed the film's premiere, arguing that Stone broke new ground for historical blockbusters in showing a man who unashamedly loved other men.[31]

The threatened suit did not mark the first time the subject of Alexander's sexuality had caused controversy; two years earlier hundreds of Greeks had stormed an academic conference when a speaker presented a paper on the subject of Alexander's homosexuality. The events, which took place at the Institute of Balkan Studies' Seventh Symposium on Ancient Macedon in Thessaloniki on 16 October 2002, are recalled by Professor Daniel Ogden, who was himself presenting a paper at the event:

> Advance publicity had attracted the wrath of the local 'nationalist' (to spare other words) party, Laos, to that evening's session, and the leaders duly arrived with mob and camera crew in train. Some forty police were deployed to protect the delegates. The principal incitement was Kate Mortensen's paper on 'Homosexuality at the Macedonian Court', but offense was taken also at the adjacent papers, my own on 'A War of Witches at the Court of Philip II?' (Philip could never have had any part in such an unchristian thing) and Ernst Badian on 'The Death of Philip II'

30 'Too Gay for Greeks: Lawyers Threaten "Alexander" Suit': http://edition.cnn.com/2004/LAW/11/25/alexander/ (accessed 29 December 2016).

31 'Bisexual Alexander Angers Greeks': http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/film/4032245.stm (accessed 4 January 2017).

> (Badian's crime was to have doubted the Hellenism of the ancient Macedonians in earlier work). The three of us were branded as 'agents of Skopje'.[32]

A day later the nationalist newspaper *Stochos* ran with an article headlined 'So Who Are These Anti-Greeks?', noting that 'Daniel Ogden has written tens of books in order to demonstrate that the ancient Greeks lived in a Dark Age of magic, prostitution, homosexuality, bastard children, adultery, etc.' The intolerance shown towards the conference speakers and the disregard for the processes of historical investigation into the cultures of sexuality in ancient Macedon was compounded and endorsed by the mangled conviction that, in essence, Greece has always been an Orthodox Christian society and that the Christian mores of the modern Greeks were shared by their pre-Christian ancestors.

Christianity came into play too when in 2013 the American Republican Senator for New Mexico, Bill Sharer, decided to attack the state's endorsement of same-sex marriage licences. Curiously though, instead of using biblical doctrine against the state's liberals and reformers, he drew upon the image of Alexander to voice his dissension. In a blog post Sharer, an impassioned if not necessarily erudite opponent of same-sex marriage and of the notion of gays in the military (Sharer served as an officer in the US Army from 1982 to 1992), wrote:

> Archaeology shows the importance of the family unit working together as the first and most basic unit of human cooperation. There is overwhelming evidence that the unit of 'mom, dad and children' has been encouraged from the earliest pre-written record . . .
>
> Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) married a Bactrian woman – modern day Afghanistan. Alexander may have engaged in homosexual activity, but he <u>married</u> a woman.
>
> He directed his officers to stop 'whoring' around and find a local woman to marry.
>
> WHY?
> BECAUSE
>
> 'It is only through blood relations that hatred and war will end.' In other words, Alexander the Great thought that marriage was about creating and raising the next generation . . . Aristotle (384–322 BC) – teacher and mentor to Alexander . . . thought that marriage was about men and women making babies. Sex between a man and a woman produces

[32] Ogden 2009, 203–4.

> babies – society needs babies – babies need both moms and dads[.] As marriage goes, so go the children, so goes the nation, so goes the world.
> This is a simple foundational move. Defining marriage as virtually everyone on every continent and in every culture has always defined it.
> Marriage in New Mexico is between one man and one woman, period.[33]

In a sharp and humorous rebuttal, gay activist journalist Christian Walters questioned why the senator had made such fundamental historical errors when championing the 'norms' of marriage: 'Instead of wasting taxpayer money to fight the losing battle against gay marriage, perhaps Senator Sharer should redirect those funds into the education system. History teachers in particular.'[34]

Interestingly, the US Army's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue' policy, which had come about as a compromise during the Clinton era in Washington so that gays might remain in the military as long as they kept their sexual preferences private, was (with some frequency) challenged by the systematic use of Alexander. 'Would Alexander the Great . . . be allowed to serve in the modern U.S. military if he were alive today?' asked one South Carolina journalist in 2006, having heard of the dismissal of Alexander Nicholson, a US Army Arabic linguist who was removed from service after being outed by someone in his unit.[35]

Online arguments for the presence of gays in the military are often endorsed by Alexander's brilliance on the battlefield, even if those championing him are sometimes a little factually off-key: 'Alexander the Great conquered the known world with a Gay Army',[36] writes one supporter, while another, Tim Connor, writes in his blog that

> Homosexuals are among the world's best killers, always have been, and Uncle Sam eagerly recruits expert killers. Alexander the Great was a swish. His dad, Phillip [*sic*] was 'bi' . . . Personally I don't see why anybody would want to join the bloodthirsty US military, but if gays want to, why stop

33 'Why Marriage?': www.williamsharer.com/blog/why-marriage (accessed 4 January 2017).

34 'Republican Senator Tells Gays to Stop Being Whores, Be Like Alexander the Great': www.towleroad.com/2013/08/republican-senator-tells-gays-to-stop-being-whores-be-like-alexander-the-great/ (accessed 4 January 2017). Same-sex marriage became legally recognised statewide in New Mexico through a ruling by the New Mexico Supreme Court on 19 December 2013, requiring all county clerks to issue marriage licences to qualified couples seeking marriage regardless of sex or gender.

35 'Alexander the Gay: South Carolinian Military Vet Takes on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"': www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/feature-zwnj-alexander-the-gay/Content?oid=1103512 (accessed 4 January 2017).

36 'Why Are People Outraged at Having a Gay Army?': https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100207073843AAdMHju (accessed 4 January 2017).

> them? If a bomb or bullet arrives at their position, it won't stop to ask if they are gay or not.[37]

Such flawed, if essentially good-willed, uses of Alexander might strike some as eccentric, but in the face of a still aggressive widespread homophobia ('gays essentially represent an enemy within'),[38] the employment of the image of Alexander in the process of the normalisation of gays in the military (no matter how distorted that image may be), must ultimately be a positive and empowering thing.

In this light, a blogger (signed simply as Arturo) twists the standard rhetoric of online discrimination and speculates how Alexander might have felt about having straight people infiltrating the ranks of his army. Citing a (fictional) fragmentary letter, dated 325 BC, written by a Macedonian general to Alexander, he offers evidence of a survey taken of troop attitudes towards 'straights in the military' before turning his attention to the intent behind Alexander's marriage to Roxane:

Dear Alex,

I have interviewed our troops as to whether there are straight people among us, as you commanded. Here are some partial results:

10 percent believe there are no straight people in Macedonia, but since we need to put some foreign people in service – the recently defeated Persians – there is a possibility that there may be straight troops. Our troops do not oppose to serving with straight people. As you know, Iran does not have homosexuals . . .

10 percent were too drunk to answer, as is expected from a Macedonian, homosexual and alcoholic warrior. You should be proud!

[37] 'What's Wrong with Gays in the Military?' Blog post by Tim Connor: www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/?p=12869 (accessed 4 January 2017).

[38] A response to Tim Connor's blog post by Henry Makow:

> Recent moves to allow gays to serve openly in the army will undermine that institution. This is the real intention. Gays essentially represent an enemy within. Straight men do not wish to live in close quarters with gay men. Is anyone concerned about *their* rights?
>
> They do not wish to face an external enemy while at the same time fending off sexual overtures *from the rear*. Homosexuals will gain rank and use it to extort sexual favors. Discipline and morale will decline. Homosexuality is all about seducing straight men . . . Homosexuality is by definition an attack on heterosexual values. These values are necessary for an effective armed combat. They include courage manliness, and sacrifice for comrades, family and country. Homosexuality is not about family, or even country. By their own admission, many homosexuals are driven by a sociopathic resentment against society bordering on subversive. That's why homosexuals fill the ranks of the Illuminati. (See 'What's Wrong with Gays in the Military?': www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/?p=12869 (accessed 4 January 2017)).

60 percent actually do not care and they say that they know straight guys in the army.

100 percent wonder if you actually like Roxane and if you married her just because you like her, or if it was for political reasons. It is not that there is something wrong about dating a woman you know, but they have seen your male lover Hephaestion. He seems very sad and when he is drunk he weeps . . . 'All men are bitches!' is what the troops [have] heard him yell . . .

That reminds me. I bought the flowers and the 'I'm sorry' card for him that you asked for. It has a tiny teddy bear, as you ordered, sir. Should I put 'It's just politics' in it?

I send you manly kisses and you will be present in my erotic dreams.

Signed,

General of HHRR and Parties.[39]

Bagoas: Time for a Little Eunuch Lovin'

In order to celebrate the newly published Landmark edition of Arrian's biography of Alexander the Great, the New York University Centre for Ancient Studies hosted a conference (10 February 2011) aimed at exploring why the writings of Arrian are central to our understanding of Alexander. James Romm and Paul Cartledge, two noted Alexander experts and the editor and introduction author, respectively, of the new Landmark *Arrian*, were invited to debate the nature of Alexander's sexuality. Part of their conversation ran like this:

PAUL CARTLEDGE: One aspect of Alexander's life that still arouses huge controversy is what nowadays we'd call his sexuality or sexual identity . . . Personally, I think any attempt to categorise Alexander in terms of modern sexual identity is grossly anachronistic, but am I not right that Alexander probably did have sex with at least one male as well as with at least two females?

JAMES ROMM: Well, I'm not sure whom you mean by the one male – Bagoas or Hephaestion? I'm guessing the former as the evidence for a sexual relationship is firmer than in the case of Hephaestion (where there is no real evidence, but plenty of assumptions). Even in the case of Bagoas – a eunuch given to Alexander as (dare I say it?) a boy toy by a Persian noble who wished to win

[39] 'Letters to Alexander the Gay'. Blog post by 'Arturo': http://thenewgay.net/2010/11/letters-to-alexander.html (accessed 4 January 2017).

his favour – there is some room for doubt, though I would venture to say he 'counts' as a male object of Alexander's sexual interest . . .

PAUL CARTLEDGE: . . . The evidence for actual sex with Bagoas is firmer than that for anything physical with Hephaestion, who may have been more of a 'bosom buddy' as we (used to?) say than a sexual partner . . . The relationship with Bagoas is simply extraordinary, isn't it? He was a non-Greek non-man (as the Greeks saw it) . . . So Alexander, in having an openly acknowledged sexual relationship with him, would have been transgressing all sorts of cultural-political boundaries. I'm inclined to believe he did – and to admire him for it.[40]

This exchange raises the question, when it comes to Alexander's sexual predilection does a eunuch count at all? If so, does a eunuch arouse Alexander's gay desires or his straight desires (Figure 19.4)? Mary Renault seems to answer that question decisively since a decidedly erotic charge emerges in her sequel to *Fire from Heaven*, *The Persian Boy* (1972). Originally Renault had not intended to continue the story of Alexander and *Fire from Heaven* therefore makes heavy use of foreshadowing to point to Alexander's later life and achievements. Nevertheless, only a couple of years later the sequel appeared. A key contrast however is that *The Persian Boy* has a specific narrator, the Persian boy himself, the eunuch Bagoas, who had served Darius III and then became Alexander's servant and lover.[41] Thus the sequel has a very different character from the ironically rather chilly *Fire from Heaven*; passion comes to the surface, the adoration of Bagoas for Alexander reflecting Renault's own strong feelings for and about the Macedonian. This different mood is well identified by Sweetman; he likens *Fire from Heaven* to a love letter from Renault to Alexander, while *The Persian Boy* is a seduction.[42] He emphasises the particular impact of the latter, which was Renault's fastest selling novel: 'The publication of *The Persian Boy* came five years after the Sexual Offences Bill decriminalised many homosexual practices in Britain, and three years after the Stonewall Inn Riots in New York marked the beginning of Gay Liberation in America. From that perspective it is not hard to understand why the book was seized on by a grateful public.'[43] He describes the novel as 'a gift for young male lovers' and records that '[g]ay bookshops in San Francisco had prominent "Renault" sections. There was even talk of filming *The Persian Boy*, with the would-be producer launching a press

[40] www.forbes.com/sites/booked/2011/02/10/alexander-the-great-gay-or-straight/#13cc1d75e118 (accessed 29 December 2016).
[41] For Renault's Bagoas see for instance Tougher 2008 and McEwan 1987, 71–7.
[42] Sweetman 1993, 256, 268. [43] Sweetman 1993, 273.



Figure 19.4 Bagoas in Oliver Stone's *Alexander*

campaign to find an actor to play Bagoas on the lines of the famous search for an actress to play Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*'.[44] Thus it is Bagoas, a eunuch, who evokes the active gay Alexander rather than the more famous friend Hephaestion; while *Fire from Heaven* is about love, *The Persian Boy* is about love and sex. This focus on sex is indebted of course to Quintus Curtius Rufus' depiction of Bagoas, and Renault also eagerly accepts his assertion of Bagoas' physical beauty. Oromedon, the eunuch who trains Bagoas for service with Darius, is awed by his protégé (17). Bagoas is a highly desirable object as well as a sexually active one; Oromedon trains him in lovemaking (23), and Bagoas sleeps with a number of men in the novel, not just Darius and Alexander, but also Oromedon and several others. Indeed, Bagoas emerges as something of a sexpert; in *Funeral Games* Roxane wonders who had given Alexander

[44] Sweetman 1993, 273.

'expert tuition' in sex (22). The sensuality of the depiction of the lovemaking of Alexander and Bagoas is striking; as Sweetman notes, 'Nothing in Mary's earlier books quite prepares the reader for these moments.'[45] It appears that Bagoas even experiences orgasm with Alexander (*The Persian Boy* 132). The impression created is that the relationship between Alexander and Bagoas is one between two beautiful young men, which is anticipated by the eunuch's earlier relationship with Oromedon; in his twenties, Oromedon 'seemed [to Bagoas] no more like a eunuch than a shaven Greek' (17), which of course Alexander was (drawing attention to his lack of a beard again). Renault deliberately presented Bagoas not as a stereotypical eunuch, effeminate, corrupt and fat, but as beautiful, noble and worthy of Alexander's attentions. When Oliver Stone came to retell his version of the story, he seems to have adopted Renault's vision completely, casting the handsome, lithe and sensual Francisco Bosch (a trained ballet dancer) as the eunuch. At one point in the film Alexander gets into bed, and Bagoas climbs in with him and, gently, they kiss. On Alexander's wedding night, when Alexander beds Roxane, Bagoas briefly enters the room, sees that there is now someone else in the bed, and discreetly leaves. In another scene Bagoas dances publicly for Alexander and Alexander kisses him, openly, publicly, unashamedly.[46] It is no wonder that Alexander and Bagoas had such resonance with the gay community. In blogs, fan sites and mainstream gay media, gay male fans were given what they desired. But there is more here than meets the eye: Bagoas clarifies the active sexuality of Alexander in a way Hephaestion had not; it is Hephaestion who is frustrated and impotent rather than the castrated Bagoas. Ultimately, for both Renault and Stone the sexual union between Alexander and Bagoas symbolises the king's desired union of East and West.[47]

Conclusion

At the conclusion of her notes to *The Persian Boy* Mary Renault observed of Alexander that 'no other human being has attracted in his lifetime, from so many men, so fervent a devotion' (409). This passion has persisted well beyond Alexander's own lifetime, as exemplified by Mary Renault's own response to him which was specifically elicited by the question of the

[45] Sweetman 1993, 269.
[46] The dancing and kissing episode is found in Plut., *Alex.* 67.4.
[47] Sweetman 1993, 268.

sexuality of Alexander. Taking as its starting point the iconic account of Alexander created by Renault in the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter has explored several twenty-first-century responses to 'Alexander the Gay' by people who identify themselves through a range of genders and sexualities. We have witnessed here numerous queer Alexanders: the chaste boyfriend, the active lover, the bisexual, the de facto eunuch, both male and female, the sex god, the porn king and the gay warrior. These images reflect the advances in and development of sexual and gender liberation experienced in the West from the 1960s onwards, but they also reflect that these advances are not uncontested – particularly by some Christians and nationalists. Alexander continues to be a source of inspiration and heated debate. For some though, Alexander is not just a top ten gay hero; he is the ultimate fantasy whose kiss we continue to crave.

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